

S*A*L*O*N*S



Valerian Tornius

SALONS

by Valerian Tornius

TO a large extent the history of the Salons is a history of European culture. It was in the Salons that the torch of humanism burned most brightly, and out of the Salons came a swarm of great personalities and ideas, wondrous talk and treasured traditions.

Here is Lucrezia Borgia, a lady who bore an exceedingly bad name, but a brilliant patron and connoisseur of the arts. Here is Leo Medici, demonstrating that there was more to the Vatican than collecting money and pursuing heretics. The Duchesse de Maine receives her friends while making her toilette, and hears the gossip of Paris. We see Madame Récamier in her Salon and learn why Napoleon disliked and feared her. Tasso, Aretino, Voltaire, Frederick the Great, Goethe, pass across the colorful stage. We sup with captains, kings and statesmen in Vienna, rejoicing that Napoleon is safely in exile, until a dramatic announcement comes and they scatter from the bright halls.


Out of the chatter and glitter of the Salons of five centuries Tornius has constructed a book that gives a new and important perspective on the parade of western civilization.

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SALONS



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Cosimo de' Medici

S*A*L*O*N*S

Pictures of Society through Five Centuries

by

Valerian Tornius

English Version by

Agnes Platt and Lilian Wonderley



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MCMXXIX

SALONS

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PREFACE

SALONS! The word suggests a kind of melody, with endless variations, light and pleasing. But whether it sounded from the halls of princely châteaux, or from the boudoirs of gallant ladies, or from the homes of famous men, it is played no more. The clatter of the present day, roaring by our windows, screaming up at us with a million voices, has silenced that song. If you would hear it, you must open yellowing books, diaries, letters, and memoirs in which the past still lives.

Not everyone knows how to read those books. It needs patience to push through all the thorns hedging round the story and reach the enchanted garden beyond—the island of Cythera. Many have not the leisure for this trial of patience; but there are some who enter that garden and wander happily with the beings from an enchanting past, for the spell is one to which we willingly yield. I shall try to be a magician and throw that spell over you.

We shall go back into the Renaissance to find the most excellent of that eager age: in the circle of the Medici at Careggi, with the Estes in Ferrara and Mantua, in the life-loving Vatican, in the villa of a rich banker, and in the boudoirs of the most beautiful women of Venice. From the Renaissance we shall pass to the capricious, overornamented world of the Baroque, and then to the agreeable kingdom of the Rococo, the world of Watteau, Lancret, Molière. We shall follow the spirit of the Rococo to Sans Souci; stay for a moment in the circle of Noble Souls, go on

to Weimar; and, again quickly crossing Europe, pause at each place where, in the nineteenth century, men and women of fine feeling developed companionship into an art.

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PART I

Renaissance



THE Renaissance was the cradle of the salon. When that momentous vision of learning first dawned, a new social outlook began to unfold, very different in spirit from that of the preceding epochs. Society in the Middle Ages was completely under the influence of chivalry; the nobles held themselves apart, and the distinction of class from class was characteristic of the times, when judgments were usually decided by tournament.

The era of the Renaissance changed all this. Since personal merit was now esteemed a nobility in itself, the barriers between the classes began to fall and the haughtiness of the nobles, until then all-powerful, yielded to its charm. A different criterion was now in use, based on individual value. Man had learned to recognize his personal worth; he had begun to realize the greatness of his manhood. What a sense of the right to free will and self-disposal breathes in the words that Pico di Mirandola puts into the mouth of God the Father in his Discourse on the Dignity of Man:

“I have made thee neither of Heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, that so thou mightest become thine own creator and teacher, taking what image and condition thou wilt. Thou canst sink to the level of the beasts, or rise on high to God!”

Admiration for man and above all for the power of individuality reached a height that has never been surpassed. It was this that inspired the poets and artists, from Dante and Petrarch to the great painters of the supreme days of the Renaissance—this faith in the nobility of man

—a nobility not to be looked for in humanity as a whole, but reaching fulfilment in the elect few. No wonder that this cult of the individual brought about a new aloofness on the part of the nobles, as the following words of Petrarch show clearly:

“It was always my endeavor to be as unlike as possible to the common herd. To that end I bent my aspirations and I should deem myself the happiest of mortals if I could become their opposite.”

Petrarch's voice was only one of many. When everyone felt the desire to weigh down the scales of life in his favor by the power of his personal worth—when birth and pride of ancestry had ceased to be the test of a man's value, and talent, wealth, and learning had won an importance of their own—then, obviously, the forms of life must change, and the manners and customs of the Middle Ages could no longer claim respect. Since forms and ceremonies were growing more and more beautiful, and dress and fashion were receiving more attention (for everyone sought to make the most of his appearance), social life took on richer and subtler aspects, attaining the character of a work of art in which all cooperated.

In this revolution no small part was borne by women. If one considers the difference between the ideal woman of the thirteenth century and that of the end of the fourteenth, one can see clearly the greatness of the change in progress. What did the Middle Ages demand of the ideal woman? Chastity, piety, benevolence, a cheerful spirit, fondness for her husband, loving care of her children, and careful housewifery. That practically exhausts the list of

qualities. It is true that learning was not altogether omitted; not only reading and writing, but a little singing, lute-playing, and dancing, though not indispensable, were yet commendable accomplishments; but a woman's moral worth ranked far above knowledge. Dante thundered against the immorality of the women of Florence, and held up before them the shining example of those who sought their happiness in the care of the home and found amusement in the spinning-wheel and loom. Philipppo di Novara advised that "women should be kept ever at their needlework and spinning, and that they should not learn to read or write." And a contemporary, Francesco Barberino, held that young girls should never come into contact with copybook or primer lest their innocence suffer.

Into this tyrannical, gloomy, monkish atmosphere Boccaccio brought the first ray of light. He led woman from the narrow confines of her home and opened for her the gates of the world. It is characteristic of the Decameron that woman's brain is constantly pitted against man's and often gains the victory. An impetus born of the dawning Renaissance was given to the right of the individual to free effort, irrespective of sex. Woman now broke from the conventional fetters in which for so many centuries she had been chained; she became conscious of her right to assert herself and she won some influence over public life. She entered into competition with men of science and art and by degrees gained a place equal to theirs. Count Castiglione, when at the beginning of the sixteenth century he pictured the ideal courtier, had the audacity to coin this phrase:

"All things that Man can grasp Woman also can understand."

This spiritual flight on the part of women is not, however, to be taken in the sense of modern emancipation. The equality of the sexes was taken for granted when the New Learning placed women as well as men beneath its spell, and it is easy to understand that a great lady of Italy took it as the highest compliment if someone said of her that she possessed a man's brain and a man's spirit.

"The name of virago, which in our times is a doubtful tribute," says Jakob Burckhardt pertinently, "was then held to be praise."

Woman naturally sought to distinguish herself where she had the best right to expect success and where it was easiest for her to keep her balance—in the sphere of the salon. Here she was in the center of social life, over which she soon gained sway. A new homage to women arose, very different from the slavish attitude of the knight to his lady; men now tried to impress the other sex with their gifts of mind and character instead of their skill at arms and personal devotion.

The development of the salon had its beginning in Naples, at the court of King Robert. This son of Anjou, who was always surrounded by a crowd of poets and philosophers, had a taste for the more refined amusements. In Naples life was one continual flow of feasting, masking, music, and dancing. There was no lack of beautiful and clever women, with an attentive ear for learned discourse. Here Boccaccio swooned for love of Donna Maria, the king's natural daughter, whom he immortalized as Fiam-

metta. Here he amassed material for the greater part of his stories. Here came Petrarch too, on pilgrimage, to receive from the king's hands the title of magister, his first great honor. Soon he was to receive a greater, when he was given the poet's crown in the capitol.

This prevailing impulse toward a social life brought a new era. Women still held themselves somewhat in the background; they did not feel themselves sufficiently alert in brain to take their part in argument or dialogue, but they soon learned the trick. Fifty years had barely passed before they were to be found in the Villa of Antonio Alberti, by the Porta San Nicolo in Florence, eagerly disputing over philosophy, ethics, medicine and politics, the lady Cosa wittily leading the debate.

The highest development of this social spirit of the Renaissance was not yet reached, but the way to it was clear. In the second half of the fifteenth century, it flourished in Italy wherever women of brain and talent were to be found, round whom a circle of gifted men could assemble. In Mantua, Ferrara, Urbino, talk and debate on any and every subject was polished to an art, and the study of ancient manuscripts and classic authors became a usual feature of pleasant social gatherings.

The Divine Isotta and Her Circle

ABOUT the year 1278 a terrifying rumor spread through Italy and set all minds in a turmoil. In the little town of Rimini on the Adriatic, where the powerful Malatesta da Verrucchio lived and ruled, a ghastly tragedy had taken place. Verrucchio's son Giovanni had killed his brother. Soon the details of the murder became known; they were passed from mouth to mouth and took on blacker colors the farther they traveled. This much, however, was sure: Giovanni had had an eye to the lovely Francesca da Polenta of Ravenna; and since he was harsh of feature and lame, his brother Paolo, known as "the Handsome" because of his fine person, undertook the task of wooing the lady.

But the game became earnest; Paolo was inflamed with passion for his beautiful sister-in-law and found her not unwilling; a tender understanding was growing between them when their happy hour was broken in upon by Giovanni. Overcome by jealous rage, he struck down his rival. And the tongue of rumor would have it that Francesca, throwing herself between the brothers, was killed by the same dagger as her lover, thus expiating her sin—though it was said that but one innocent kiss had passed between them.

On Dante, who, though young, already carried in his heart his love for Beatrice, this tragic event made so deep an impression that he never forgot it. When he was writing his great work it came before him as he wrote the lines in the sixth canto of the *Inferno*:

One day
 For our delight we read of Lancelot,
 How him love thrall'd. Alone we were and no
 Suspicion near us. Oft-times by that reading
 Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
 Fled from our altered cheek. But at one point
 Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
 The wished smile so rapturously kissed,
 By one so deep in love, that he, who ne'er
 From me shall separate, at once my lips
 All trembling kissed. The book and writer both
 Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
 We read no more.

Two centuries had passed since then, and Rimini was once again the scene of fratricide; but this time the news made no impression on the people, for the times had changed and deeds of blood had become only too familiar. The son of the beautiful Isotta degli Atti, whom Sigismondo Malatesta had chosen as his heir, fell a victim to the ambition of his natural brother, Robert, and she herself was poisoned secretly by the usurper.

The veil of forgetfulness, lifted rarely by an historian, has fallen on this tale of the greed of power, while the other story on which love has cast its spell is still vivid. Francesca's name has been made immortal by Dante, but Isotta, the more important of the two, has found no singer to celebrate her tragedy. But whoever goes to the little seaport on the Adriatic and spends a moment in the Church of San Francesco, will come upon a tombstone that stands out from the rest by reason of its very simplicity. It is the sarcophagus by Ciuffagni, against the wall of the

Chapel of St. Michael, and is borne on the shoulders of two elephants, the crest of the Malatesta. It has this inscription:

Sacred to the memory of the Divine Isotta of Rimini, 1450

We know of Francesca only that she was beautiful, and adorable. Isotta was renowned also for her learning. She was the first woman to become a noted leader of a literary circle. Her contemporaries called her the "beautiful" Isotta; we should not do so today. Her face was masculine of feature, with a high forehead and eagle nose—or so one gathers from the medallions of Matteo de Pasti and Pisanello. But the Renaissance had its own standard of beauty; according to the ideas of those times. Caterina Sforza and Lucrezia Borgia were great beauties, though the portraits surviving do not bear this out. A graceful carriage and walk counted for much in their estimate of womanly charm, being taken, indeed, for beauty. We may suppose that Isotta pleased more by the agreeableness of her manner and her fine figure than by the beauty of her face.

Indeed, she must have had some unusual distinction—some uncommon charm—to bring a strong nature like Sigismondo Malatesta to her feet. She kept him long as her adoring lover and then became his legal wife. That he loved her passionately his enemy Pius II tells us, but even without this papal testimony we should believe in Sigismondo's love, for it was the only love of his profligate life. He set up no monument to his two other wives, Ginevra

d'Este and Polissena Sforza, whom he is said to have killed, though it is not proved; yet for his Isotta he not only built the dignified monument, but had her likeness carved on a die for medallions, and sang her beauties like a lover of the rococo age, in verses of extravagant adoration. His fancy found an inexhaustible store of pet names for her. She is his "snow-white innocent dove," his "rose," his "pride of Italy." When he praises her charms in more sonorous tones he uses the figure of the sun's rays, which pale when the shining graces of his love appear, an image that was in frequent use with Renaissance poets. In short, he hymned his Isotta like a second Petrarch.

A strange rôle for Sigismondo Malatesta when one remembers that this man was not behind Cesare Borgia in crime, that he was a profligate who held the honor of a woman of no account when his desire claimed satisfaction, and that he was a human tiger, who shrank from no means to the end he purposed. Countless evil deeds are recorded of him, especially in the invective that his enemy Pius II launched against him. But whatever exaggeration there may be in this, the fact remains that he was one of the greatest criminals in history. If Dante had lived to know Sigismondo he would have sent him to the seventh circle of hell, where murderers and tyrants expiate their sins in craters of boiling blood.

This conscienceless brute had one of the finest minds of his time. He was a man to whom learning and the companionship of the learned were as necessary as war and oppression. In his person were to be found soldier, poet, philosopher, humanist, and Mæcenas. Even Pius has not

omitted to set down his intellectual gifts. He excommunicated the lord of Rimini and fought with him, but he admitted that Sigismondo was a good historian and had a profound knowledge of philosophy. He handled everything as to the manner born. In his thirst for renown he was a true child of the Renaissance, and all his actions had the homage of posterity for their aim. To this end he built a stalwart city, the Rocca Malatestiana, decorated the church of San Francesco with fine allegorical paintings, bringing marble from Istria for the rebuilding of the church, robbed San Apollinare in Ravenna of most precious carvings, called numberless men of learning and a crowd of poets to his little court, and took pains to win for it a position of esteem in Italy. His assistant in this work, taking the major share in all intellectual activity, was Isotta, the "pride of Italy," the much-praised poetess of Rimini.

And yet this renowned Sappho, to whom, it was said, Apollo would surely have awarded the poet's crown, is not known to have left behind her a single poem or even to have written one. But this must not be taken as a measure of her capacity. There were many important men and women in those days who could not use the pen. They learned from the talk of others and especially from the reading aloud of manuscripts. There is no doubt that Isotta must have been a clever, quick-witted woman. There is plenty of evidence of this: her able handling of Sigismondo, a difficult man to understand; her patient bearing with his many love affairs; her truly heroic self-sacrifice when Rimini fell on evil days; and the intelligent statecraft which

she displayed when duties as a condottiere took her husband away.

We can believe that Isotta showed an active interest in humanism, but we cannot share the extravagant praise of her as a thinker of the first class and a universal genius. She could not have joined issue with either Isabella d'Este or Isotta Nogarola on any point of learning. She belonged rather to the women who at the end of the century had become a type in Italy, which through a combination of qualities, a pleasant and agreeable manner, a zealous interest in the questions of the day, and discreet command of social forms gave the impression of a many-sided personality. Such women, as Jakob Burckhardt puts it, were clever before all in the art of impressing men of standing and curbing their wills to their own.

There is a collection of poems, known as "Isottai," in which the influential lady of Sigismondo's love is acclaimed and sung. Such collections were not uncommon in the Renaissance, when men of the more cultured circles wrote poems for amusement. When Lucrezia arrived at Ferrara, the rhymed praises of her grew in number to such an unwieldy mass that an ordered compilation became necessary. Such productions have less literary merit than interest as historical data; their object was to curry favor with the ruling prince, his ministers or nobles; and this was supposed to be achieved by adulation of the patron's lady-love. The Isottai drip hollow phrases and false raptures. But they attained their end; many of the authors rhymed themselves into a farm or a well-paid berth.

It is surprising how easily Sigismondo let himself be

cajoled by these flatterers. If one came along, half-starved, in rags, and brought the "rex," as Sigismondo was called by his poets, a couplet of staggering hexameters, written in Isotta's honor, Sigismondo took him straightway to his heart. The poet withdrew, enchanted. He knew that rich reward would be his, and if Fortune held out her hand to him, his mortal remains might rest in a sarcophagus in San Francesco.

Such beggar poets, attracted by the freehandedness of the great condottiere, overflowed the court of Rimini, but it would be wrong to think that the Divine Isotta's circle was composed solely of parasites. Among the learned men and true artists to be found in her salon, there were many philologists, as was the case at all courts during the early days of the Renaissance. As a result there was much quarreling at the Rocca Malatestiana, where the debates were held, for philologists have always been a quarrelsome set and retain that quality to the present day. Their contests took the form of a literary tourney.

The most obstinate combatants were the two poets, Basinio and Porcellio. Basinio, one of those laid to rest in the Temple of Malatesta, was a native of Parma, and a disciple of the renowned Vittorino da Feltre. When only twenty he was a professor of rhetoric at Ferrara and alternated between that town and Rimini. His flattering poems had won the favor of Isotta and Sigismondo, and he received from his patron a villa and estate. He must have lived extravagantly, for when he died he left nothing, and his widow was forced to sell her only horse to pay the expenses of his funeral.

With this exalted person Porcellio dared to enter on a battle of words. The standing Basinio held in Rimini left no doubt that he would come off conqueror in the conflict, the point contested being whether a man can be a good Latin poet without knowing Greek. Porcellio thought that Greek was not necessary, but Basinio took the opposite point of view. Both contestants fought with bitter fury, hurling invectives at one another until the real point at issue was completely lost sight of. Which was the keener brain and braver fighter, we do not know, but Porcellio and his second, Tommaso Seneca, had to retire from the field. Humiliated and beaten, they left the town.

Among the poets who praised Isotta was one Giusto de' Conti, who also was laid to rest in San Francesco. He was a man of intellect and fine manner, who had spent some time at the papal court of Nicholas V. Sigismondo had long noticed this man, and when Giusto came to Rimini with a message from the pope he welcomed him. Giusto's mission was to reconcile Malatesta with Federigo Montefeltro, with whom he had long been at feud. Sigismondo, with his smooth tongue, knew how to persuade his guest to remain in Rimini. Giusto was a lyric poet. The best-known of his verses are those in praise of the hands of his beloved, and for these he was called the "poet of the beautiful hands."

Besides Giusto there were many poets of less merit revolving about Isotta. Poetry was in the air at this court. It worked so powerfully on certain souls that even men as serious as the military engineer Roberto Valturio, who wrote a book upon the art of warfare and was busied

solely with dry studies, ran into rhyme over the "Divine Isotta."

So continuously did they sing that it seemed as if Rimini would play the part of an Italian Parnassus. A beginning had been made; but the great men of the day either avoided Rimini or came for brief visits. The Medici reputation as patrons of the arts enticed the more important men to Florence.

When time claimed Sigismondo and his Isotta, the little court upon the Adriatic which they had made notable sank to its former insignificance. A decade or two later, Cesare Borgia stood without the walls and made an easy conquest of the town, which Pandolfaccio, the weakest of that warlike race, left in the lurch like the coward he was. The covetous desire of former popes to possess this little city was gratified by Alexander VI.

II

Symposia at Careggi

WHEN Spring comes to the valley of the Arno and blesses the land with her gifts, it seems as if Florence received her peculiar favor, for the town shines like a queen in diadem and many-colored robes under that spendthrift hand. The whole neighborhood becomes a field of flowers, reaching from the gates of the town to the summit of the surrounding hills. The eye would weary of this glowing carpet were it not for the cypresses, like dark obelisks, and the marble villas on the hillsides. Those white villas are like the guardians of a secret fairyland; some in clothes of newer fashion stand up in slender grace, but others, of older days, are massive, and bear stiffly pointed crowns upon their heads. The mingling of styles shows that the villas were built among the strongholds. A writer of the fifteenth century dwells on this characteristic of the town upon the Arno:

“In the crystal air round Florence lie many villas, in that cheerful country with its wonderful view; there are few clouds and no unpleasant winds; everything is kind there, even the pure, sweet water; and among those countless buildings are some like princes’ palaces, but others like castles, rich and magnificent.”

Many of these country-houses, looking like “palaces,” and yet having today somewhat of a sleepy aspect, have close association with the name of the Medici: one now called Villa Spence is on the slope below Fiesole; and another, on the road to Pistoia, was Lorenzo the Magnificent’s favorite home; the villas of Cafaggiolo, too; and

the most illustrious of country-houses, Careggi. Michelozzo built it for old Cosimo, that he might rest here away from the worries of statecraft and the workaday world, and indulge his love of learning undisturbed. No better retreat from daily cares could be imagined than this garden-encircled villa, gazing with wide eyes down the valley of the Arno. In spite of its strong masonry there is a sense of peace about it; indeed it was the home of peace. Here its first owner passed his happiest days; here his grandson Lorenzo held his debates upon the profundities of philosophy; and here they both found the lasting peace of death.

No name is more intimately associated with the Medici than Careggi. It shines like the sun over the history of the race, a sun whose warmth and light we still enjoy. One might believe that Fate had purposely chosen this little villa as the birthplace of a new era, so surprisingly young and fresh was the spirit that was born here. The rooms of this country-house witnessed an unexcelled art of living: a genius for the finer joys of love and friendship, for music and poetry, learning and debate. The young prince Galeazzo Sforza, astonished at the social charm that ruled here, when he visited Careggi in the April of 1459, described his impressions in a letter to his father:

"I went to Careggi, Cosimo's beautiful palace, which I explored with extraordinary pleasure, both as regards the truly splendid gardens and the fine building. It is one of the best houses in the town if one takes into account the rooms, kitchens, halls, and the whole accommodation. I dined there with the whole family with the exception of

Giovanni, Cosimo's son, who did not sit with us because he had in charge the serving of the table. After the meal I went with the rest of the company to a room where we heard Maestro Antonio sing to the guitar; I believe your Excellency knows him, if not personally, then by name. Beginning with your first brave deed he continued with his song until he ended with praise of myself. His performance was so agreeable and excellent that perhaps no other poet in the world, excepting only Lucan and Dante, could have shown such dexterous art in the mingling of old stories with numberless names from ancient Rome, myths, poems, and the names of the nine Muses. After I had listened to this I found myself among beautiful women. Piero's and Giovanni's wives were there, a grown-up daughter of Piero's, the wife of Piero Francesco, and a young Strozzi girl. I do not know if she is the most beautiful woman in the city but she cannot be far from it. There were some girls from the country, too, and they all danced in Florentine fashion, gaily and delightfully."

There was not always such a circle of handsome women as clever Lucrezia Tornabuoni, Lorenzo's mother, gracious Maria Ginevra degli Alessandri, Giovanni's wife, Bianca, like a fragrant bunch of may, Cosimo's grandchild, and the charming Strozzi girl to be found at Cosimo's villa. Women's laughter did not always sound through those stately rooms, poets sing welcome to the newcomer, nor Tuscan maidens dance the Florentina. There were days when women were missing, when scholarly men, in folded mantles, sat about the table and talked earnestly of learned things.

The youngest of them was Marsilio Ficino, yet it was he who led the talk. He was wont to say with pride that Cosimo was a second father to him, and he was right, for Cosimo loved him like a son. He wanted to keep him close at hand and gave him the lease of an estate near Careggi. Even in his last hours he would have Marsilio by him, to read aloud to him and so ease the coming of death.

Cosimo asked many to his villa. When Pope Eugenius IV, at feud with the Council of Basel upon the supremacy of the church, transferred his court to Florence, a whole crowd of humanists came to the city on the Arno. Along the Piazza della Signoria in the Loggia dei Lanzi and at the bookseller's—Bisticci's—they were to be seen—disputing over some erudite question as eagerly as they dispute nowadays on 'Change. When Cosimo called, they hurried eagerly to the Platonic gatherings at Careggi.

Old Poggio Bracciolini went there too; he was as amusing in real life as his famous "*Facetiæ*," whose piquant wit still makes good reading. Although he had fourteen children in Rome, this man of fifty-five committed the folly of marrying a girl of eighteen, who increased his family by five more. When a priest once reproved him on the subject of his many natural children, he retorted that he was only following the example of the clergy and, perhaps, to insure for himself a still greater number of grandchildren, he made four of his sons priests. Poggio was not only a witty and satiric pamphleteer; he was also a man of learning. He was among the first to recognize the beauty of the old Roman ruins, and no one equaled

him at rummaging about in abbeys and unearthing from heaps of dust and decay the most precious manuscripts. Cosimo esteemed Poggio highly, and he knew it well.

"Though busy with the weightiest interests of the state," he wrote, "and so not able to give a great portion of your time to reading, yet, in the intercourse with the learned men who have always the entry to your rooms, you have found great pleasure."

One of Poggio's sharpest adversaries was the humanist Filelfo, a great scholar, but a hot-tempered, arrogant man. He had fallen out with Cosimo and even made an attempt upon his life, it was said; and yet later he lived almost entirely on the bounty of his old enemy. A strange fellow, too, was Nicolo Nicoli, a bibliophile who advised Cosimo in the buying of old treasures, and books. He walked the streets dressed like a young girl in rose-colored garments, and a love affair in which this quiet scholar was concerned caused a great deal of gossip. He had taken away his brother's mistress, and the brother one day, with the help of a friend, gave the girl a thrashing in the street, in front of Nicolo's house. An acquaintance, passing by at the time, gave the flighty Benvenuta a sharp lecture. When the humanist heard of this he flew into a rage, seized his pen and hurled invectives against his brother's critic. A lively war of pens followed in which nearly all the humanists of Italy took part.

Many of the Florentine poets and scholars went to Careggi and joined in the discussions at Cosimo's Round Table. The theme was usually Plato. There has seldom

been a more zealous admirer of the Greek philosopher than Cosimo de' Medici. He was fifty when he heard Gemistus give readings from Plato and the impression it made on him was so great that it changed the whole trend of his thought. The idea occurred to him to start a Platonic Academy in Florence, and young Marsilio Ficino was chosen to translate the works of the great philosopher. That Cosimo and his contemporaries fully understood the Platonic doctrine and had made it their own cannot be said. True Platonism had become so confused through the Fathers of the Church that it was a difficult task to cleanse it from all these growths and alloys. But it cannot be denied that Cosimo took great pains to penetrate to the inner teachings of Plato, so far as the knowledge of philosophy in general, and Greek in particular, of that age allowed. The translation of Aristotle by Argyropulus, belonging to the same period, shows that the Medicis were the first to attempt the purifying of Greek philosophy, and it is evident that Cosimo, by a comparison of the two systems, meant to work out his own independent point of view. The great Greek sages had their resurrection in the Florence of the Medicis.

In that villa of Careggi, whose walls had been witnesses to so many philosophical discussions, Cosimo, the first great Medici, died, concerned with Plato even to his last hour. A richly busy life thus came to an end, a life of which no moment had been wasted, and that had been one long alternation between statecraft and scholarly hobbies, a life of sorrow and struggle, but blessed with spiritual gifts.

Cosimo was the founder of the Symposia at Careggi, but his grandson Lorenzo gave them his individual stamp. Through him the aura of the circle took on another color—became more worldly.

Lorenzo, whose title the Magnificent corresponds to “your Excellency” in our times, carrying no suggestion of individual merit, is not to be considered superior to his grandfather. The more genial, foreseeing, and powerful of the two was certainly Cosimo. Cosimo had first to make a position for himself in his native town; and before he could find time for the pursuit of his ideas he had an obstinate fight with the Albizzi, to whom he was inferior at the start. That done, he had to raise a strong party, in the divided city of Florence, to insure his own supremacy. His grandson took over a leadership already assured, in a well-ruled state, devoted to the Medici family, so that it required no great care to hold the threads together. The sentences of death delivered by the Florentines against the Pazzi, after the plot to which Lorenzo’s brother Giovanni fell a victim, showed what a strong hold the house of Medici had on the people of Florence.

In other ways Lorenzo was a favorite of Fortune. Cosimo was more or less self-taught and had acquired his knowledge by untiring study, but Lorenzo from his earliest childhood received a solid grounding in humanistic learning. The boy’s natural gifts ripened early through constant association with the men whom Cosimo drew around him, and he grew up in the atmosphere of the artistic world. The variety of his interests preserved him from a one-sided outlook. Philosophy lay as near to his heart as

statecraft; no one art took precedence of any other with him; when with sculptors he showed the same attentive interest that he gave to poets or scholars. His agile brain found itself at ease in any province with an eager desire to get to the heart of the matter instead of limiting itself to a superficial dilettantism. Even in less important things, as in the qualities desirable in the *cavaliere*, he showed himself a virtuoso. Nature had been something of a stepmother to him in the matter of outward gifts—no one looking at his harsh, angular, rough-hewn face, with its flattened nose and wide nostrils, could call him a handsome man—but by means of bodily exercises, riding and the practice of various sports, he had attained a certain imposing carriage. He was the first to embody the ideal of the perfect cavalier of the Renaissance.

Lorenzo enjoyed life in the highest sense. He used the treasures of both art and learning collected by his grandfather to make his own life beautiful. Not that he squandered them, but neither did he keep them shut up in chests, safe but hidden from the rest of the world. He enjoyed his possessions and sought for more, with the true Renaissance spirit, to share the pleasure with his friends. The comradeship between the artist and his patron never took so distinctive a form as under Lorenzo the Magnificent. As a rule in the states of Northern Italy, the artist was subservient to his princely Mæcnas, even when intimacy existed between them. Lorenzo was a stranger to patronage of that kind. Although his protégés called him "my lord" in their letters, there was no barrier when they were together. When among his guests he was not the mighty ruler



Lorenzo de' Medici
From a painting by Vasari

of Florence but one of themselves, and this gave to their circle a pleasant freedom.

They met in careless gaiety. Even when piety seemed to forbid, it broke through, as on the expedition described by Angelo Poliziano of the cheerful pen, writing to Lorenzo's wife Clarice.

"We started yesterday and came to San Miniato, singing and talking now and then of sacred things, so as not to forget that it was Lent. At Lastra we tasted the local wine, which I found better than I had been led to expect. Lorenzo is in good spirits and keeps his companions so; yesterday I counted twenty-six horse among our company. Last night, after we had reached San Miniato, we began to read from St. Augustine. The reading was followed by music and the performance of a master dancer who is here. Lorenzo is just going to Mass."

This same exuberant delight in life and living characterizes many of Lorenzo's poems—a certain Epicurean tendency, a preaching from the text—"Never heed the future, enjoy the present and all it offers you."

Youth, how beautiful its treasures!
But how quickly flee its pleasures.
Let's be happy—no more sorrow.
Who can answer for tomorrow?

An abounding love of life inspires the two long poems, "The Hawking (*La caccia col Falcone*)" and "The Boon Companions (*Beoni*)," though the latter is frankly obscene. In spite of the coarse humor in the picture of the tippler forlornly seeking a thirst, and coaxing it with her-

rings, salt meat, sausage, cheese and such like viands, it is a clue to the tone and ways of Lorenzo's circle. When reading of the home-returning poet who meets two lively companions on the way and stops to broach a cask of wine with them, one is reminded of Poliziano's letter. Those noble Florentines all knew how to appraise a good vintage.

The poem on hawking also paints in the colors of life the ways of this company of friends. The hawking party starts at sunrise; the morning sky is still red and a light breeze gently brushes the cheeks of the riders. They are all full of cheer; little adventures shorten the road; and at last they reach the desired spot. The falcons, whose names fill a whole strophe, begin their work, and with eyes glowing with zeal the hunters follow their flight. Many a bet is made, many a quarrel breaks out, and the time passes quickly until at midday hunger and thirst bring their pleasure to a stop.

At this hawking we meet many members of the Symposia at Careggi. There is Luigi Pulci, author of the burlesque-romantic epic, *Morgante Maggiore*, forerunner of Bojardo and Ariosto. Lucrezia Tornabuoni, Lorenzo's mother, who was herself a poetess, was Pulci's patroness, a somewhat surprising fact, for she was deeply religious while Pulci openly called himself a freethinker. He was one of Lorenzo's most intimate friends and spared no trouble to spread the fame of his patron. He once wrote from Pisa:

"If it is to be known that I am your friend and have some influence with you, let the fact be placarded on the walls—at your own expense, be it understood. Since I have

had no money for some little time past I have given your name instead. Wherever my glance happens to fall I see men whispering, 'That is Lorenzo's great friend.' "

Luigi Pulci had constant feuds with Matteo Franco, another of Lorenzo's friends, who played the part of fool. Franco, a merry priest, owed several fat livings to his lively Muse, and bombarded poor Pulci with sonnets in which he reproached him for every sort of misdeed. It stirred Pulci to the loss of his self-control, and he wrote to Lorenzo that it had caused him to be "seized with fever in the middle of the square."

"I can neither eat nor sleep," he went on, "and am beside myself. My whole household has been dissolved in tears for the past week. And yet you will neither see nor believe."

Lorenzo, indeed, did not take the thing seriously but was much amused at the contention.

But the friend whom the Magnifico loved in his heart of hearts, who must never fail to be with him when hunting or hawking, was Angelo Poliziano. He is one of the most sympathetic figures in this circle, a man of varied knowledge and strong character. When only sixteen he embarked upon the difficult task of translating the *Iliad* into Latin; the work was never finished but it won him the favor of Lorenzo. He was untiring in the composition of Latin verses, epigrams, odes, elegies; and his verses are not the mere toys of a scholar's idle moments, nor the dull, formal efforts of the verse-maker, but the work of an artist. His other poems, written in the Tuscan dialect, confirm this.

Poliziano had a firm friend in the patron who made it possible for him to live for his studies. Their friendship continued until Lorenzo's death, and was only once disturbed, when Madonna Clarice, Lorenzo's wife, objected to Poliziano having the care of her son's education. This otherwise clever woman of the Orsini family, who had been chosen by Lucrezia as wife for her son, could not bring herself to approve of the broad humanist views of education held by Poliziano. But this caused only a temporary breach, and Lorenzo, having withdrawn his son Piero after a short trial from Poliziano's care, put his favorite back into his old place. From that time they were inseparable, and Poliziano was with him when Lorenzo died.

In the circle of intimates were also found Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino, and Pico di Mirandola. Ficino had played an important part in Cosimo's time. We have heard how their mutual love for Plato formed a bond of union between them. Ficino had striven for twenty-five years to reconcile Platonism with Christianity, and to show the fundamental likeness of Greek and Christian ethics; but at last he lost sight of his main purpose in a fantastic mysticism. During Lorenzo's reign, the oncoming years had turned Ficino into a true citizen of the world. He usually lived alone on his estate at Montecchìo in perfect content, away from all ambitious strivings, seeing only Lorenzo, Poliziano, and Pico di Mirandola. Only when the symposia took him to Careggi did he leave his solitude, for he would not fail to attend under any circumstances.

What Ficino stood for with regard to Florentine philosophy, Cristoforo Landino was for literature. By giving

readings from Petrarch, he assembled a circle of youths with literary tastes about him, and later he added to his following by earnest study of Dante. His best-known work is the dialogue "*Disputationes Camaldulenses*." This dealt with the days of Lorenzo's youth and expressed the view that a statesman should also be a philosopher and use his leisure hours in studying the original of all things. Landino had the evident intent of impressing the coming ruler.

But the most important of all, perhaps, was Giovanni Pico di Mirandola, a youth of princely lineage, handsome, and lovable, of charming manner and outstanding mental gifts, a very encyclopædia of learning, but one of the few who could carry the burden of excessive knowledge without harmful effect, and retain his fresh outlook upon life. When he died at the age of thirty-two, one of the lights of humanism was extinguished. His was a figure of such radiant youth that it still shines down the centuries, to warm our hearts in the present.

It has already been said that Lorenzo gave a different character to the gatherings instituted by his grandfather. The difference will be clear when we compare the presiding heads: Cosimo, almost patriarchal, still in the bonds of monkish teachings, formal and thorough, and Lorenzo, the man of elegant life, loving fun and splendor. It was natural that this difference should affect the guests and change the tone of the conversation. Strict ideas gave way to a lighter way of life, and the Platonic scholars embarked on side-paths of adventure and easy loves, as is proved by more than one piece of documentary evidence.

An innovation appeared in their arrangements. Lorenzo decreed that a certain date, the seventh of November—said to be both the birthday of Plato and the date on which the great philosopher died—should be set aside, and that the symposia, held by the founders of the Academy, according to Alexandrine tradition, right down to the days of Porphyry and Plotinus, should once again be revived after the lapse of centuries. Marsilio Ficino has described one of these symposia for us, when poets and scholars assembled for a lively meal, presided over by Lorenzo. Then Plato's Symposium was read aloud, the guests each taking a different speaker in the dialogue and each in turn construing the text. One read and construed Phædrus's speech on the birth of Eros; another that of Pausanias on the dual Aphrodite; a third commented on the nature of love; a fourth discoursed of Agathon, including a comparison of the divine with earthly passions in the scope of his speech; while yet another strove to reconcile Christianity with the teachings of Socrates.

Even in those days love had become an inevitable source of conversation. They might clothe it with Platonic terms and seek to thrust the teachings of philosophy well into the foreground, yet discussion on the real meaning of love remained the main subject. It was so charming to be able to talk philosophically and wrap one's own little weaknesses about with a veil of fine phrases, both disguising and excusing them—for the men of the Renaissance showed a marked hypocrisy in love affairs. Many of these Platonists, besides their rightful loves, kept a second hidden away for their leisure hours.

Lorenzo made no concealment of the fact that as a poet he felt he had the right to love Lucrezia Donati and celebrate her beauty in song. To refrain would have been against the views and customs of the time. It would have been a restriction on his freedom that a full-blooded man of the Renaissance would have bitterly resented.

Youth, how beautiful its treasures!
But how quickly flee its pleasures.
Let's be happy—no more sorrow.
Who can answer for tomorrow?

III

Lucrezia Borgia and Her Court of the Muses

COMING from Raffael's "stanze" to enter the "Appartamento Borgia," one feels a certain apprehension, as if setting foot in a vault round which the tongues of the people whisper grim tales. These notorious rooms are shrouded in menacing gloom; they lead one from another in terrace form, with walls set all awry. Upon those walls hang wraithlike figures, saints and martyrs, looking down upon the newcomer with agonized faces, as if to say:

"Read for yourself the poignant secret of our souls."

Beyond these pictures, and the suite of rooms, the narrow marble stairway leads to the Torre Borgia, the sinister tower where Cesare slew his hapless victims. The past lives again, memory raising the spirits of the dead. Among them is Alonzo of Aragon, nineteen years old and Lucrezia's third husband. These rooms bring to mind his tragic fate on that summer night when the Neapolitan prince was attacked on the very steps of St. Peter's by his brother-in-law's assassins, and fled to the appartamento streaming with blood, to fall before Lucrezia's eyes.

He had not foreseen that his place of refuge would soon prove his death-chamber; but Cesare lay in waiting, and as his life did not ebb swiftly enough, Michelotto, at Cesare's command, hastened the end. Without a sound, in grim silence, they bore the body of the most beautiful youth in Rome back to St. Peter's, and there in the dead of night they buried him in the Chapel of Maria della Febbri.

Cesare's thirst for blood demanded countless victims, and here, in the Torre Borgia, he thought out his cruel

deeds. One crime after another reached from these rooms into the streets and homes of Rome. But when his lust for murder was assuaged, a sudden magic transformed these gloomy vaults into brilliant halls. Pinturicchio's saints and martyrs seemed in the light to lose their ghostly aspect and become flesh and blood, and in their faces the Borgias and their circle might see their true presentment. In the recesses of the windows marble benches gleamed, under the arrow-slits shone the gilded coats of arms of the papal house, and on the painted tables sparkled treasures of jewel and gold.

The senses glowed in this riot of color, bedazzled souls were snared. Where so short a time before had been heard the moans and cries of the dying, were now music and laughter and shouts. The majolica tiles were cleansed of blood, and the light feet of beautiful courtezans danced gaily where those ominous stains had been. Decorously beginning with a piva, or salterello, or some such modish measure, the whole court of the Vatican merrily joined the dance; but gradually excitement grew, and the dances became more obscene. All laws of modesty were broken; Cesare himself gave the signal and in the chambers of Christ's Vicar on Earth reigned stark bacchanalia. The pope, seventy years old, clapped happy approval, the sight of the nude dancers inflaming his senile senses. He watched the shameless lights-o'-love crawl on the floor, scrambling for the chestnuts strewn beneath the lighted candelabra; he helped to award the prizes for the most impudent immodesty, and enjoyed the greed of these daughters of Eve, receiving their silk petticoats, shoes, and caps. He chatted

like a cavalier with his daughter, who sat by his side. And Lucrezia did not hide her child's face in her hands, her cheeks did not redden with shame. She had a smile for this scene of orgy—a smile of understanding. She smiled at the jokes of her father the pope, smiled at her brother's flattery, smiled at the courtiers' compliments. She would only smile at malicious innuendo, and not, like her brother, order her detractor's tongue to be torn out and his right hand hacked off. Her gayest smile was for the man who entered the hall of festival, crying: "*Evviva Lucrezia Borgia, duchessa de Ferrara!*" She rewarded him with the gift of her finest brocade gown, with the cloak of velvet, bronzed-hued and sable-trimmed.

Scarcely three months had passed since the bacchanalia in the Appartamento Borgia when Lucrezia made her entry into Ferrara as its future duchess amid the applause and the rejoicings of the populace. The wedding festivities began with pomp. The Throne Room in the palace of the Cortile shone in splendor. Silken carpets, embroidered in gold and silver, adorned the hall and at the narrow end a dais was raised, with a baldachin of cloth of gold above it.

Lucrezia sat on the dais; near her, the princesses of Mantua and Urbino, Isabella Gonzaga and Elisabetta Montefeltro. All three women were dressed in costly robes; the young duchess wore brocade, with wide, sweeping sleeves, and a cloak of ermine. Arms and neck were decked with jewels and pearls, and her loosened hair was caught in a diamond-studded net, a wedding present from the duke. The guests so crowded the hall that there was scarcely room to dance. They could not enough admire their young duchess. Isabella alone, who had no liking for this

marriage of her brother, looking on it as a mesalliance, maintained a proud reserve. When not able to talk with the French ambassador she was bored with the display, so alien to her own interests. She longed to be back in quiet Mantua.

Lucrezia won hearts with her lovable charm. The poets, crowding round her with their homage in Latin and Italian poems, epigrams, and sonnets, seeking her favor, unable to find words to express the wonder of her, were all under her spell. Yet a few were still mistrustful of the daughter of Alexander and uneasy at the sinister rumors that had found their way even to Ferrara. Was that apparent modesty and sweetness merely acting?

Lucrezia felt that she had enemies here, and wished to bring them to her feet—to turn their looks of hatred into admiration. She decided upon a master stroke—a triumph. She commanded the dancers to stop, and the couples obediently stepped aside. Then she rose and came down from the dais, mingling the dignity of a queen with the modesty of a girl of sixteen taking her first decisive step. The musicians played a Spanish tune, and the young duchess danced. The rattle of the tambourines accompanied each of her graceful, capricious movements; her silken garment swam round her slender body in waves of softness. And on her lips was the same smile with which she watched Cesare's orgy and with which she smiled her way into every heart.

When the dance was at an end and the eyes of the young duchess seemed to round with the childish question, "Well, how did you like it?" then even the unfriendly were melted, and Ferrara was proud of her.

That people form their judgment of others on the character of their surroundings is an old truism. "Tell me the company you keep and I will tell you what you are." The saying applied to Lucrezia Borgia. So long as she was breathing the heavy air of the Vatican and took her part as spectator of the orgies and crimes of her father and brother, she seemed like a Messalina and was branded in numberless epigrams and satires as the lowest hetæra in Italy. But from the time she turned her back on the papal Sodom and became heir to the throne of the most cultured princely house of the Renaissance, Lucrezia suddenly changed from a devil to a saint. If one is to believe the eulogies of the poets of Ferrara, she must have been a beautiful, virtuous, and gifted lady. Could any woman receive more flattering testimony than this from Ariosto?

Lucrezia Borgia, be the hours quick or slow,
In beauty, virtue and in fame doth grow,
Waxing in name and fortune, like the flower
Spellbound in earth, warmed by beneficent shower.
Like tin to silver, copper to pure gold,
The poppy of the field to lovely rose,
Pale willow tree to laurel green and cold,
Or colored glass to gem that richly glows,
Such is she, peerless and unparalleled.
None such before was ever, surely, seen.
So singular her loveliness, 'tis held
Above all gifts save one—her mind serene.

Even more exaggerated praises were penned by the other poets of Ferrara in honor of the lady Lucrezia. These poems would fill a fat volume if they were collected. Yet one can feel sure that scarcely a tenth were written from

conviction. The poets of the Renaissance were little concerned with truth; for a couple of ducats they were ready to write panegyrics on their bitterest enemy and, when necessity urged, they would pay for a shirt with a toadying sonnet. Lucrezia was said to have an open hand in the reward of homage. The story of the Roman juggler who flattered her in the public streets and received a costly brocade garment as his reward may have reached Ferrara. It was a temptation for the needy poet to imitate the tactics of the juggler and win the favor of the gentle lady with a couple of sycophantic rhymes, and the poets of Ferrara did not resist it. Lucrezia Borgia's household accounts tell us that she rewarded one and another with brocade and silk as she did the Roman juggler.

The picture the court poets of Ferrara paint of their lady cannot therefore be considered reliable. Nor can the slanders that the enemies of the Borgias—the Roman writers—showered upon her. Only the poets speak of her beauty; the diplomats and courtiers are more cautious. But there must have been something striking in her appearance. Even so experienced an admirer of female beauty as Cardinal Ippolito d'Este showed by his glowing eyes how the first glimpse of her impressed him. The Ferrarese who tells us this adds, as if to explain the secret of her charm:

"Ella è donna seducente e veramente graziosa."

He was right; in her grace lay her seductiveness. It was inborn and showed itself naturally at very festival or entertainment, especially when she danced. That is as it should

be with the *gentildonna* of the Renaissance, and many saw their ideal in Lucrezia.

Except for an obviously idealized medallion there is but one authentic picture of her. It is in the "museum" of Paolo Giovio, that zealous collector who did such good service to the Italian history of his own days. This picture fits exactly with the description of the young duchess given by Nicolo Cagnola, who came from Parma to her wedding.

"She is of middle height and charming figure. Her face is long, and the nose has a delicate profile, her hair golden yellow, her eyes of unmistakable blue. Her mouth is somewhat large, but the teeth are dazzlingly white; her neck, slender and white, suggests energy."

Only in one particular does Cagnola's description differ from the picture; he speaks of golden yellow hair, whereas if the oil painting is to be believed, Lucrezia's hair must have been light brown. This casts suspicion on the authenticity of that flaxen lock, guarded with such care in the Ambrosiana, on which Lord Byron and other visitors to Italy have looked with such ecstatic emotion. Both her hair and her blue eyes were copiously sung. Ercole Strozzi writes of their magic. Whoever looks too long at the sun is blinded; whoever gazes into the Medusa's eyes is turned to stone; but those who meet Lucrezia's eyes are saved from this fate by the flame of love that is lighted in their souls and sends the tears welling from their eyelids. Ercole pretended that the Cupid in Lucrezia's bedchamber had suffered this spell and been turned into marble. Did he mean the Amor of Praxiteles or that of Michelangelo? The duchess owned them both.

If there is any truth in the saying that the eyes are the mirrors of the soul this woman with the blue eyes cannot have been a Messalina. And she was not. The two Catholic pamphleteers, Victor Hugo and Donizetti, made her into that. She was no better and no worse than other women of her time. Desire and love of ease were in her blood as with all the Borgias, and it may have been that she slipped on that polished Vatican floor. But all the unnatural vices they hung about her name were the invention of the Borgias' enemies. One should rather be surprised that the poisoned air of Alexander's court did not work on her more radically. Until her marriage with Alfonso of Ferrara she had no standing of her own, but was simply the pliant tool of her father and brother, who loosed or cut her marriage bonds as suited their own policy.

By the time she was twenty-two she had been betrothed four times and married three. Her fourth and last marriage was due to the fact that the pope wanted to see his daughter on a throne. But Lucrezia was not averse to this marriage, perhaps because she was anxious to escape the tutelage of her father and brother; and she must have felt that the court of Este offered her a chance to play a leading part.

Lucrezia knew that in the matter of learning only Mantua and Urbino could vie with the court of Este and that on becoming duchess she must enter into rivalry with the two most cultured women of the time—Isabella Gonzaga and Elisabetta Montefeltro. Did this coming contest fill her with dismay? She may have felt some uncertainty, or she would not have been so eager for the friendship of her sister-in-law. That much depended on her winning Isa-

bella's sympathy the affectionately flattering tone of her letters proves. The marchesa laid aside for good that cold reserve which she had shown at Lucrezia's wedding, and from the ceremonious politeness with which she answered the first letters sprang in time a sincere friendship.

In accomplishments Lucrezia was far behind Isabella. She could speak several languages and had some knowledge of Latin and Greek, had read a few popular works of contemporary literature, had been taught a little music, drew a trifle, and, after the manner of her day, could scribble sonnets—mediocre ones: that exhausted her capabilities. Yet she was not without her part in the literary movement of her day. While her dull, serious husband was indulging his own tastes for architecture, industries, and armament, she took literature under her wing. It was to her talent in drawing humanists and poets to her court that Ferrara owes her claim to be considered the first salon of Italy.

Autensio Laudo, apparently a great gourmand, describes Ferrara in those days of her literary blossoming in the following words:

“What shall I say of that splendid town of Ferrara? Why, that it is the best place in the world for sausages, sweetmeats, herbs, fruits, and vegetables and that here alone can you drink the heavenly wine of Albervelli in its perfection and eat the very choicest fish.”

It is a strange description of a town which, so contemporaries say, was as full of poets as the surrounding meadows were of frogs. Must one draw the conclusion

that the good things to eat drew the verse-makers to the court? Or was it the cult of woman, under whose banner the lords of Este had ranged themselves from the first? The Estes and their women-folk were generous patrons. Even in Lionello's time they had found entertainment here. The marchese invited them to his table and talked with them on humanist questions. Or he would contrive a debate between Belfiore and Belriguardo under the oaks and laurels.

Ercole I surrounded himself with a whole court of poets. During his reign Ferrara gained a leading position in the world of letters, and in the social arts. In the glory that streamed from Ferrara the little states of Northern Italy sunned themselves; the customs of the court of Este were the pattern for those of Mirandola, Asolo, and others. Lucrezia merely trod in the steps of her father-in-law, when she patronized literature. Other pleasant houses in Ferrara tried to rival her; and what Lucrezia's court of the Muses did on a grand scale the smaller houses of the Pios, Obizzi, and Castelnos did in a small way.

It was a cheerful company that Lucrezia assembled. To her came famous teachers who were, however, sorry rhymsters; and many poet smiths, who beat out verses upon their anvils in homage to their lady that they might slink into the circle. There were also poets by the grace of God—lyric, dramatic, epic; romance writers, satirists, clever speakers, humorists. Among them the most renowned publisher of his time—Aldo Manuzio. Some of these lived in Ferrara; others came on visits, short or long. Like a magnet Lucrezia drew them all to her. It seemed as

if they did not think their productions complete unless they had received her approval.

There were some eccentric characters. Old Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, doyen of the poets of Ferrara, was a man as much detested as a statesman as he was loved as a singer. In his younger days he left Ferrara for some time on account of a charming blonde, and sang her beauties in a cycle of sonnets that made him famous. But it was not the blonde maiden—whose name was Anthea and who seems to have had no ear for Tito's poetry—it was Lucrezia to whom they were dedicated.

Strozzi was in the truest sense of the word the court poet of Ferrara. If anything happened that could be celebrated in a sonnet, either the arrival of a foreign prince, or a wedding and consequent festivities, old Strozzi promptly bestrode Pegasus. And he did it easily and with taste. Latin verse was his stock in trade; he battled zealously for Latin at the end of the century, when there was a great debate as to whether Latin or Italian was the better poetic language—a point over which all the poets contested with fire.

Tito's son Ercole walked in his father's footsteps and wrote Latin verse, lyrics and odes—usually in praise of Lucrezia. He surpassed his father in feeling, but in style was his inferior. A warm friendship united him with the Venetian poet, Pietro Bembo, who came as a not unwilling guest to Ferrara and stayed for a long time. He was always to be found where beautiful women ruled. The "new Petrarch," as they called him, liked to dally with the ladies, who did not withhold their sympathy from him, for he

was distinctly good to look upon, of great attainments, a perfect cavalier, and, above all, a most amusing talker. Bembo wrote his *Gli Asolani* in Ferrara, three discourses on love. These were read aloud in Asolo, the home of the de-throned queen of Cyprus, Caterina Cornaro, and were merely a glorification of Petrarch and his ideas of love.

Bembo gave the signal for that cult of Petrarch which was soon to develop into an unhealthy adoration of the famous author of the sonnets to Laura, an enthusiasm similar to the Werther adoration of some four hundred years later. Every dilettante and poetaster felt himself bound to write at least a sonnet to Petrarch, to prove his own right to a place on Parnassus. In Venice for a long time young elegants might be seen strutting in perfumed gloves, a rose behind the ear, a Petrarchino, as the small edition of the *canzoniere* was called, hanging from the pocket, sending inviting glances at the ladies as they promenaded the market-place.

Bembo became famous through his *Gli Asolani* and to Lucrezia fell the honor of its dedication. He enjoyed her special favor, but he had a rival in Celio Calcagnini, a courtier and a man of the world, who had assisted the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in his love adventures, and read mathematics and astronomy at the university. He was busy also with history and numismatics; he adapted old comedies for Ercole's theater and composed metrical eulogies of the fair sex. A similar flatterer of women was Antonio Tebaldeo, whose love affairs were as famous as his sonnets. He instructed little Isabella in the art of turning verses and later Lucrezia took him into her service as a sort of private

secretary. The berth cannot have been very well paid or Tebaldeo would not have begged the marchesa to send him four shirts, saying that he would pay for them in sonnets.

A man of a different type was Jacopo Caviceo, whose bark had weathered many a storm before he found harbor-age in Ferrara. He was a man who could use fist or pen with equal dexterity and who had stirred up much ill will by his lawless ways. Now this whilom street brawler, abductor of nuns, and unfrocked priest appeared as a respectable prelate in the palace of the Este and handled the emoluments of a bishop's vicar. His leisure time he devoted to writing romances for which his own joyous adventures served as material. The only one of any note, however, was the love story, *Peregrino*, which was of course dedicated "*alla savia ad accostumata Lucrezia Borgia*."

But the most important poet at this court of the Muses was, of course, Ariosto. He did not yet suspect that his *Orlando Furioso* would win him a place of honor among Italian epic poets, for this heroic poem, written in honor of chivalry and its battles, was as yet barely begun. He was known only as an occasional poet and writer of comedies. It was said too that when melancholy overtook him or when love had him in thrall he would give forth a despairing little poem. He was melancholy by nature and loved solitude, preferring to stay away from the tumultuous festivals. He was seldom to be seen in Lucrezia's salon, but when he did appear he was, no doubt, the most honored of the guests. His good figure, dreamy eyes, dark beard, finely cut features and the sad expression of his face made him uncommonly attractive. His air of brooding and the

reserve which made him almost shy gave to his personality something of agreeable mystery, which must have appeared entrancing to the ladies. He was the king of the poets of Ferrara.

A tragedy was associated with Lucrezia Borgia's court. The eyes of the duchess had fallen on young Ercole Strozzi. Her easily touched heart was inflamed. He had offered his homage, as did they all, and celebrated in verses her beauty and talents, her charm and virtue. Then the pretty, flattering lines suddenly became passionate love poems. Lucrezia found pleasure in them, and sent Ercole silks and brocades, and even on one occasion gave him a rose on which she had pressed a kiss. The poet received it in ecstasy and sent in return this epigram:

Rose, emblem of joy, plucked by her delicate fingers,
Does not the warmth of your color glow more splendidly fair?
Has Venus robed you anew, or is it Lucrezia's lips,
In kissing, have crowned you in purple, so regal, flaming, and
dear?

We do not know whether Lucrezia gave him only a rose. The chroniclers of the time are discreetly silent on this point. Yet there did not lack evil tongues to whisper in the duke's ear—and Alfonso had a jealous eye and a revengeful spirit. The slightest hint was enough to arouse his jealousy and fan his temper into flame. Like a tiger, he lay in ambush, waiting for the moment to spring upon his foe. And the moment came. Ercole, who had recently married a beautiful young widow, had not yet finished his honeymoon when he was attacked and brutally murdered

near the church of San Francesco. His throat was cut, and when they found him, he was bleeding from twenty-two wounds.

All Ferrara was incensed at this dastardly crime, and demanded that the murderer should be brought to justice. Yet the one man who had power to dispense that justice turned a deaf ear. Who, after this, could doubt that the duke himself had instigated the murder?

The wave of indignation subsided as quickly as it had arisen, and the poets soon forgot the death of their friend—forgot as quickly as Lucrezia did. They were used to deeds of blood in Ferrara; every tower, every castle could tell of its love tragedy. In the Torre Marchesana, Parisina's shade walked. She had laid her head on the executioner's block for her criminal love for her stepson Ugo, who suffered death in the gloomy Lions' Tower. And when Angela Borgia had dared to lift her eyes to Giulio, the stepbrother of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, poor Giulio had paid for her indiscretion not only with the loss of an eye, which the jealous cardinal ordered to be thrust out, but also with life imprisonment, because he presumed to take into his own hands the expiation ordered by the duke. He languished in the moldering dungeon with his stepbrother Don Ferrante, while over his head Lucrezia was giving her intoxicating fêtes.

The young duchess had no leisure for thoughts of state prisoners or the fate of the victims of brutal passion. All she wanted was to be amused. Why should she waste a tear over one poet when so many others were competing for her favor? And indeed she had more inclination for



Laurezia Borgia and Son with Astrologer
From a painting by Giorgione

the handsome witty Bembo than for the limping Latinist Strozzi.

That she loved Bembo may be seen from her letters, now in the Ambrosiana Library of Milan. It is true that nothing in them points directly to intimacy with the poet—they are too carefully worded for that—but there can be little doubt that intimate relations existed between them. One can see it in Lucrezia's anxiety to preserve her anonymity whenever a warmer feeling creeps into her letters. Bembo's letters and poems, too, speak clearly. They are extravagant with idolatry of Lucrezia. He calls her "the light of his existence," his "dearest life," he kisses her hand, "the most beautiful I ever raised to my lips." He writes rapturous sonnets, and speaks always of his love and of that only. Once when he lay sick of a fever, Lucrezia came to see him, concerning which event he wrote:

"With one look, one pressure of your hand, health was restored to me. As your dear words brought love and cheer and comfort welling back to me, they woke me again to life."

Their messenger was the beautiful Angela, for whose sake Giulio lost an eye. She enjoyed the confidence of the duchess, though there were others about the court who also knew of the romance. The tender secret was not hidden from the poets, among them Ariosto, and of course to the Strozzi, in whose house, at Ostellato, Bembo had for some time led a philosophic life. Tito Strozzi, Ercole's father, made merry over the matter in an epigram, in which he derived the name of Lucrezia from *lux* and *retia*, with mocking allusion to the net in which Bembo was en-

tangled. The old fellow had, however, no real right to make fun of Bembo, for he himself was one of Lucrezia's adorers and paid her homage in sonnets of delirious exaggeration. The strange thing is that the jealous Alfonso did not get wind of the secret.

The love idyl seems to have reached its climax in the autumn of 1504, when the duke was in France, consolidating the alliance between Ferrara and the French court. Lucrezia was alone in her court of Ferrara. The old duke Ercole had retired to the castle of Belriguardo near by, where he lived out the rest of his days. When he died soon after, his son Alfonso took the scepter into his own hands and it seemed prudent to Lucrezia to loosen the love knot between herself and Bembo, if not to cut it completely. Perhaps it had already come to an end. It is not unlikely that Bembo, warned by the tragic fate of his friend, felt the risk he was running to be serious, and that it was this which led him to turn his back on Ferrara. His passion for Lucrezia may have cooled, and the inconstant conqueror of women's hearts may have been seeking for another Muse. He soon found her in hospitable Urbino to which city he bent his steps.

After Bembo's departure things began to grow quiet in Ferrara. The alarm of war brought misgiving to the town, and the country suffered under the ban of excommunication which Julius II had pronounced against Alfonso when he refused to give up the French alliance and refrain from making war on Venice. The time of extravagant fêtes and pleasures was over. And even in Lucrezia's

salon the social life died down. Maternal duties, following the birth of several children, crowded aside her literary interests, and her whole trend of thought and life began to take a religious inclination. When Leo X placed the tiara on his own head all was still in Lucrezia's court of the Muses, for that love of the arts inborn in the Medici drew all the more famous artists to his court, and with them went the poets of Ferrara. Only Ariosto and Calcagnini remained true to the house of Este. Soon after this, Ariosto finished his Orlando, and the fame of that poem for long threw a reflected glory over Ferrara.

And then—Tasso's genius illumined it anew.

IV

La Prima Donna del Mondo

NO other woman of the Renaissance controlled the social forms of her time so completely as Isabella d'Este, marchesa of Mantua. She embodied the ideal of the *gentildonna* of the fifteenth century. At the beginning of the sixteenth century no other woman enjoyed so great a popularity. Her fame was not confined to Italy; wherever the refinements of life and learning were honored, she was the example for aspiring femininity.

In the circle of distinguished people to whom the marchesa was an inspiration and a spur, she was able to reconcile and unite very different types. Everybody of note came to her hospitable house, both when she was living in Milan and on her second visit to Rome. She had no sooner reached the Eternal City and settled into the Colonna Palace, which had been placed at her disposal, than her house became the meeting-place for the intellectuals of Rome. Cardinals, diplomats, poets, and scholars—among them the illustrious Sadoletto and Bembo—took part in the almost daily gatherings. Serious discussion and lively chatter alternated; music was never lacking, and Isabella herself sang to the lute accompaniment.

In her own palace of Mantua, it seemed as if with her a new spirit had entered the ruling house of Gonzaga. Isabella was not yet sixteen when Gian Francesco brought her home, but thanks to an excellent education and the cultured environment in which she had grown up, she had in spite of her youth a ripe understanding of life. She transplanted the atmosphere of the court of Este to Mantua, and made of this little court a second Ferrara.

Isabella found herself in a similar position to that of her sister-in-law Lucrezia. She had a husband who was a brave soldier, a politician, and a sportsman, but who had no real understanding of art or learning, although he had no prejudice against either. The marchesa was thrown entirely on her own resources. She had artistic inclinations and a collector's zeal, but she found her circumstances more difficult than her sister-in-law's, and had not the means to become a patron of the arts, for the treasury of Mantua was at a low ebb.

This led to unpleasant crises from which the marchesa was the greatest sufferer. She found this particularly painful in Rome. She had longed to see the Eternal City, and when she set off without the knowledge of her husband she found herself so short of money, even before her goal was reached, that she could scarcely complete her stay in Rome in decency. Pope Leo X gave her five hundred ducats; but this was only a momentary relief, for a princess like Isabella had costly tastes, buying antiques and commissioning pictures from the finest artists in Rome. She was soon obliged to negotiate a loan and went first to the banker Agostino Chigi, and then to Prince Guglielmo da Sermoneta. Both let her have the money willingly and charged no interest.

Under such circumstances, the poets of Mantua could reckon only on clothes and food; they very seldom received money. It is therefore the more striking that the poets of the Renaissance, who were not backward in their expectations and were always covetous of an open-handed patron, should have turned to the marchesa, although they knew that they had no dazzling reward to expect

from her. Bembo, Bandello, Ariosto, Bernardo Tasso, and many others sent their manuscripts to Isabella, as if their publication hung on the good word of the "prima donna del mondo," a proof of the esteem in which they held her and the weight her judgment had with them.

In the same way she extended her patronage to the plastic arts without ostentatious expense, as can still be seen in the palace of the Gonzagas at Mantua. Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Lorenzo Costa, Francia, Dosso Dossi, and Perugino painted for her and brought the result to Mantua. When she commissioned a painting she usually supplied the idea, often a gigantic mythological subject, and not very practicable for artistic execution. She showed a strange anxiety about the decoration of her private rooms in the Reggia, the so-called Appartamento de Paradiso, and the Studiolo. She wanted pictures from the greatest artists of the time. If one visits that Paradiso nowadays one can get only a vague conception of the appearance of this room in her time. It looks sober and cold today. On the vaulted walls there are still the remains of gold and ultramarine, and the eye is still caught by the tarsia frieze on the old beams, with the arms and devices of the Gonzaga, and the scroll of music on its azure background, which Isabella chose as her favorite emblem; but the hospitable spirit that once gave such charm to these rooms can now be realized only from Lorenzo Costa's painting of Isabella d'Este and her court, hanging today in the Louvre. It used to be thought that everyone depicted in this was a member of her salon, but now it is known that this was not so; the picture



Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino
From a painting by Caroto

was merely symbolical. Nevertheless the impression is given of an atmosphere of refined Renaissance sociability, and the painting remains a wonderful glimpse into the life and ways of Isabella's court.

The Paradiso, in the days when Lorenzo Costa's masterpiece still hung on its walls with other fine paintings, housed also the collection of antiques, the valuable "anticaglie," globes and atlases, medallions and coins, statuettes, musical instruments, and objects of art from all over the world. In its fine library, the Greek and Latin classics were to be found, as well as the three great masters of the Renaissance, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and the latest romances of chivalry. It was a library to rouse the envy of every bibliophile.

In this strange mixture of museum and boudoir the gay medley was characteristic of the owner and of her peculiar, intimate world, in which learning, art, and society seemed interchangeable terms. She was like that herself, "la prima donna del mondo," always astir, eager for knowledge, loving everything that was novel and fine, always charming and ready for cheerful talk. When not busy with letters, or negotiating the purchase of some unique treasure from the dealers in antiques, or discussing their own works with authors, or gossiping merrily about household difficulties with princes and cardinals, her time was given up to social entertainment.

She could not bear to be alone; she must always have someone in whom to confide, and who would take an interest in her doings. She could not find such a friend in her husband, for their interests were too widely different. The

marriage was not as happy as some people think. It is true that Isabella possessed the requisite indifference of the grande dame, who knows how to shut her eyes to lapses in marital fidelity, or at any rate to appear to do so. This thoughtful wife went the length of choosing a Mantuan beauty for her husband when he went on his travels, handing her over as his companion on the journey. She was uneasy only when Gian Francesco insisted on choosing for himself, because he had such bad taste. This ironical humor of hers helped her over the rough places; and if she suffered she told no one but her most intimate friend, the marchese's sister, Elisabetta.

She was the first to whom Isabella opened her heart. Three years older than Isabella, Elisabetta had met her with extraordinary frankness and friendliness, which helped the marchesa to feel quickly at home in Mantua. The two women had the same bent and both loved a social life. They read the newest tales of chivalry together, sang French chansons, played cards, went little excursions together, journeying as far as the Lake of Garda. The friendship was not broken when Elisabetta became duchess of Urbino. Many letters traveled to and fro, letters in which the friends told one another all their experiences, and the affectionate tone of which shows how deep was the respect these two clever women had for each other.

Isabella formed many friendships in Mantua. For a time the nun Osanna was intimate with her, and deeply influenced her religious feelings. Men like Cardinal Bibbiena and Count Castiglione, a relation of the house of Gonzaga, were proud of her friendship. She gave the cardinal the

nickname of *Moccione*, or Humbug, because he did not keep to the strict truth when telling stories but chatted of everything, possible and impossible. She loved Bibbiena's stories none the less, and as his presence always brought merriment she welcomed him to her circle. The cardinal was often in Mantua, and perhaps it was the less highly placed ladies in the marchesa's following who really attracted him, especially one of them—Isabella Lavagnola. When he wrote to the marchesa he always added a kiss for the adored Lavagnola in the postscript which no doubt Isabella, who looked tolerantly on such jests, promptly bestowed.

Isabella did not follow the custom of the queen who to enhance her own beauty allowed only ugly women to be about her. On the contrary she made good appearance an indispensable qualification for every lady who wished for a place in her court. She herself did not need to fear competition; she was everywhere hailed as the most charming lady in all Italy. Giangiorgio Trissino regarded her as the highest type of Renaissance beauty, and the Marchesa de Cotrone, on the occasion of Lucrezia's marriage with Alfonso d'Este, declared that Isabella outshone all the women in beauty and grace. Even today, looking at Titian's portrait, one might endorse this verdict with some slight qualification. The charm of her appearance lay less in the harmony and development of her figure than in the wonderfully well-cut features and the nobility of her carriage.

Wherever the marchesa went with her "priestesses of Venus," as a contemporary called her ladies, great excitement prevailed and the hearts of the men were stirred.

There were outstanding beauties among these ladies, and they were both coquettish and lively. Every day they were beautifully dressed and on Sundays and feast days appeared in their silks and satins. They were especially free in manner when away from Mantua, and certainly Isabella seemed to choose carnival time for preference for her excursions.

In February, 1513, the safety of Milan was threatened by her alluring *bande joyeuse*. That city was used to company through Ludovico il Moro's brilliant feasts, and its own women, as Bandello tells us, living in luxury and freedom, were kind and trusting, made to love and be loved, and experienced in the ways of love—but even this paradise of light pleasures broke all bounds when the beautiful ladies of Mantua arrived there. Though the French were encamped before the town and the noise of cannon mingled with the gaiety of carnival, the inhabitants gave themselves up to the wildest enjoyment.

The marchese of Pescara, who had lately beaten the Venetians, was himself overcome by the charms of beautiful Delia, while the archbishop of Gurk, Monsignor Matteo Lang, burned for little Brognina. The prelate had little luck, for the Spanish viceroy Raimondo di Cordone, soon sent him from the saddle. The story had an amusing epilogue. Brognina had to expiate her loves in a cloister, from which, however, the French king Francis I, another victim of her charms, had her abducted by the bishop of Nice. As the bishop was triumphantly returning with his prize, he met a troop of Spaniards who recognized the beauty, set her free and pummelled her ghostly abductor. As a climax,

they found on him a forged breve, absolving Brognina of all sins if she would be untrue to the Spanish viceroy and transfer herself to the French king.

The carnival was not so amusing at Bologna, where Charles V. was waiting. Here it came to an open quarrel between the Spaniards in the emperor's suite and the Italian admirers of Isabella's ladies, with the result that three Spaniards lost their lives.

How indecorous the behavior of these ladies could be, this Bologna carnival showed. On all hands complaints arose, and daily protests against their unseemly ways were hung on the walls of the palace. It is noteworthy that the marchesa, who was angry at the indecencies of "Calandria," especially that it should have been performed before a lady like herself, took no notice of the naughty habits of her escort. She was surprisingly tolerant in this regard, even smiling when her ladies indulged in caresses with her son Federigo or sent him lascivious letters. It was undoubtedly an amusement to her to see men caught in the toils of her priestesses of Venus, and she often used them for political purposes, hoping to bend to her own purposes those who were so allured. This game was successful as more than one instance proved. Isabella was a woman of worldly wisdom who pursued her ends with all the energy at her command. In the same way she went to Rome and secured for her son Ercole a cardinal's hat. Her husband was right when he called her *una donna di sua opinione*.

This exceptional talent, or rather this distinction, was noted everywhere. For a time she set the fashions in Italy. The dressing of her hair with silk and ribbon, as Titian's

portrait shows it, found many imitators at neighboring courts. Her exquisite perfumes had a great renown. Even the queen of France begged a pair of perfumed gloves from her, and although the perfume was found to have suffered from the journey this did not prevent the queen from wearing them. She asked for reports on all Isabella's gowns. Wherever Isabella appeared she was received with the greatest respect and was the bright particular star of society.

"La prima donna del mondo." What woman of the Renaissance better deserved to be called so than the marchesa of Mantua, the greatest connoisseur of art and the art of living of her time? Where else could be found that *bel esprit*, that genius for entertaining, which her circle showed her to possess? Only in Urbino, the little castle in the Apennines, where Isabella's sister-in-law, Elisabetta, called into being her own social kingdom.

An Evening at the Castle of Urbino

ON the slope of the Apennines, looking over the Adriatic, the little town of Urbino lies in the heart of Italy. That mountain-site is picturesque rather than pleasant, but the climate is good and the land around is fruitful, so that all that is needful for the life of man is to be found under that cheerful sky. But the greatest blessing the little town enjoys is, in my opinion, that she has long been ruled by the best of princes, and has been exempt from the wars that have ravaged other parts of Italy."

As Count Castiglione thus saw Urbino, so it looks today, to the traveler approaching along the road from Pesaro—that road which leads to the palace of the Montefeltro.

It is two hours by the car that goes daily from the coast town of Pesaro to Urbino, proudly perched upon her mountainside. Alessandro Sforza's summer villa, survival of the past era of the condottieri, looks down triumphantly over the valley, where the *chaussée* winds, following the half-dry bed of the Foglia. At first this road goes in leisurely fashion between overhanging vines and fig plantations; later it turns between rocky walls in which the spring rivulets have graven deep fissures; then, suddenly, the valley opens out, and before one stands the medieval stronghold, frowning down from a shoulder of the mountain. The *urbs bina* is overtopped by the commanding castle, which leans boldly over the thick walls of the town. Before reaching its gates the *chaussée* winds and winds, so that the rocky nest is seen from all sides, the way becoming steeper and steeper, while the castle, like a standard, draws and holds the gaze of the approaching traveler.

There are many condottiere strongholds in Italy, and all have the same characteristics: a dismal, sinister grayness, presenting a proud front to the mailed fist of war, but of a glaring mediocrity, which is equaled only by late Roman mausoleums. The castle of Urbino is not like this. It does not give the lie to its own stern appearance. There is an openness about the building, an air of distinction, a nobility of feeling, a strength of purpose, so that it seems the stone presentment of the Renaissance.

Three architects, Luciano from Lovrana, Francesco di Giorgio, and Baccio Pontelli, joined to build this wonder, and yet its real creator was the ducal builder himself, Federigo II. Not the Federigo who, as the inscription in the castle courtyard boastfully reminds us, took the colors six times, beat the enemy eight times, and had never been defeated. That was not the man who gave his stronghold his own characteristic imprint. Had he merely been a fighter he would have erected a fortress for defense as Sigismondo Malatesta did in Rimini. No, the Federigo who built this castle was the man whose justice, mildness, kindness, and piety his subjects praised, who, besides being a soldier and a statesman, was admirable in moral character and one of the most clear-sighted men of his time. According to Ludovico Odasi, the tutor of his son Guidobaldo, he had but one rival in intellectual attainments and that was Lorenzo the Magnificent. For whoever looks at the castle can see that it bears both without and within the stamp of its ruler's personality which the centuries have been unable to destroy.

The arcaded courtyard, reckoned by Burckhardt to be

the finest of the Renaissance, except that of the Cancelleria, betrays at once a marked originality. This impression is increased, when one turns to the left of the entrance, by the duke's library where the magnificent collection of books was kept—a collection that was divided later between the Vatican and the Barberini Library. The seven tables of learning, the Trivium and Quadrivium, once enriched the room, the Dialectic, now in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, being the finest of the still-existing tablets. It shows the figure of the duke, whose kindly, clever profile is not so clearly seen in any other existing portrait.

The great reception room, the *salone del trono* as it was called, makes a chilly impression now because of its emptiness, but it must have been imposing on festival days. Next comes the *sala degli angeli* with unsurpassably beautiful doors and graceful fireplace.

We pass into the duke's private rooms, among them the study. It is not the overdecorated ceiling, picked out with gold and blue, that is the moving thing in this room, nor the costly inlaid work of walls, doors, and bookcases—but the arrangement of the whole, the comfort and beauty. From narrow windows one looks out over a wide expanse of country; mountains with their rigid heights—Monte Nerone, Asdrubale, Furlo—holding the secrets of centuries inviolable from the time when Hannibal's unlucky brother, with fifty-six thousand soldiers, met a hero's death in their ravines. In this ducal study the spirit of Federigo seems still living; here one can see him sitting and reading as Justus of Ghent left him for us to see. These were holiday hours for the duke. Tired with the day's work of ruling the

state he would shut himself up with Aristotle or a Father of the Church, or with some more modern author, Petrarch perhaps, to rest and to refresh his brain. He collected all his treasures to enrich his kingdom for his heirs, even as he built his castle, not for himself but for his grandson, as the inscription tells us.

More than four hundred years have passed since the duke closed his eyes in death and his delicate deformed son Guidobaldo, a boy of ten, entered into his heritage. The rooms of the palace are silent now, but they whisper a secret to those who understand their language—the secret of a little world of brilliant intellect, that Federigo created and Guidobaldo developed.

On a night in the spring of 1507 little Urbino was humming with excitement over the experiences of the last few days. Pope Julius, returning from the conquest of Bologna, stayed to rest for a space in the palace of the Montefeltro, and everyone was invited to court, to aid in his entertainment. It may not have been so sumptuous a reception as that which Borso of Ferrara gave to Pius II, with the intention of obtaining from the pope the ducal crown, but it was splendid in its way. Count Castiglione tells us that “the foremost town of Italy could not have furnished greater magnificence.” That is probably an exaggeration, for the court of Urbino was not rich enough to vie with Ferrara, and the duchess, concerned over household affairs, had begged her sister-in-law Isabella to send her “some altar cloths of gold and silk, with tablecloths and carpets.” And if the pope’s comfort was not insured

by the two baldachins and other things that Elisabetta had also asked of her sister-in-law, yet he had a most amusing time and rode away with his escort with a contented spirit. Indeed, some of the cardinals and courtiers were so comfortable—having never before encountered such social entertainment—that they gladly accepted their host's invitation to stay a few days longer. But now the gentlemen had slept off the effect of their potations, and, awakened by the morning sun, had left their rooms and hastened to the apartments of the duchess.

In the *sala degli arazzi* a reception was held. The duke, on whose poor health the excitement of the last few days had had a bad effect, remained in his own rooms. They were accustomed to see him withdraw from the evenings' entertainments and did not miss him overmuch. The center of the social life was the duchess.

Elisabetta could never throw off the melancholy disposition of the Gonzagas. Her eyes had a tearful look even when she was laughing and joking. In Mantua she may once have been a light-hearted child, but since her marriage, high spirits had left her. She bore her husband no ill will—Guidobaldo was an excellent fellow and had inherited many fine qualities from his father—but the mother instinct, which burned like fire in Elisabetta, could not be fulfilled while she remained with that delicate husband. She hid her sorrow from him as well as she could, with so much assumed cheerfulness that everyone who knew her saw in her the perfect *gentildonna*. The burden of entertainment lay on her, no matter how big the number of guests.

Says Castiglione: "It seemed as if all tried to follow her lead, both outwardly and inwardly, everyone taking pains to copy her; and her fine manners were as a plumbline of rectitude for the behavior of all when with so distinguished a lady."

This the guests who were staying in Urbino had discovered even in so short a time. Now they came to her, one after another, the witty author of the *Calandria*, that gallant courtier Bernardo Bibbiena at their head. The wandering minstrel, the "unique" Aretino followed him (wherever he sang the people flocked to hear him and the merchants even closed their shops to listen) and then came Nicolo Frisio, whom Pietro Bembo in his history of Venice describes as "a German, but dressed in the costume of Italy."

Signor Ludovico Pio was there too, the brave husband of an even more famous wife, Graziosa, from Milan. Giuliano de' Medici was with them, Lorenzo's youngest son, quietly genial, writing sonnets in his leisure hours, a man "whose excellence and noble life," as Castiglione puts it, "should have adorned the world a longer time." Giuliano died when he was thirty-seven.

Count Ludovico da Canossa was one of the guests, a noble Veronese, a diplomat and man of the world, of somewhat effeminate manners which made him the subject of mocking comment, especially from the ladies. Many others were there—Pietro Bembo must not be forgotten; he had just won the bays with his *Gli Asolani*. They greeted the duchess with respect and took their places, each man if possible beside a lady.

The finest thing about this circle was the absence of all stiff ceremony. No prudishness or sense of class fettered the company. Everyone was welcome who had personal distinction, whether for art or learning, diplomacy or merely a knowledge of life. There was the greatest freedom in thought and speech, so long as no breach of good taste was committed. And this very freedom was perhaps the best safeguard. To please the duchess was the thing most desired and to displease her the direst misfortune. The women took care that any transgressor should be made to feel ashamed. The knavish Pierto Bembo must often have suffered at the hands of his Emilia Pia.

Signora Emilia was the duchess's assistant. This worthy and inseparable confidante sometimes was in charge of the entertaining. No one was better suited to the task. She was not behind her royal friend in brains and wit, and to her life's end was a true lady of the Renaissance. Even on her death-bed she had a lively discussion with Count Ludovico over Castiglione's Cortegiano. Signora Emilia took the lead at this reception.

What should they do? Play *giuco senese*, that game of question and answer, which was played in a series of whispers, one to another? The duchess smiled in friendly fashion at Bembo; he knew what the smile meant. It was to remind him of the evening when sitting next Emilia, he had whispered in her ear the words, "*Io ardo*," and had received the answer, "*Non io*." He thought of the unhappy days he had passed after this disillusion, until he put his sorrows down in sonnet form. But, no—it must be something new tonight. What would Signora Emilia sug-

gest? The company all looked to her eagerly; but the lady knew how to get out of her difficulty. How would it be if everyone there suggested some game that they had not yet played? Then they could choose the most amusing.

Signor Gaspare had to begin. The youngest there—he was only twenty—he had his answer ready. “You first, signora,” he said politely.

“But I have already given my idea,” she said, annoyed. “Make him obey, duchess.”

The duchess laughed but did as Signora Emilia wished, naming her as her substitute for the evening and giving her full power. So Signor Pallavicino was not to be let off. His suggestion was very young and sentimental: everyone was to name the virtues that he wished his lady-love to possess and even mention the faults that would be least disagreeable in his eyes. The lady sitting next to him, Madonna Constanza Fregoso—had a wittier contribution to make; one would guess that from her roguish little mouth, which began to chatter at once. But, as it was the will of the duchess that the ladies should remain silent for this night, Madonna Fregoso was not allowed to continue. Signora Emilia turned to Messer Cesare Gonzaga. Everyone began to smile before he could speak, for they were accustomed to his follies and expected yet another.

“I know I am a fool,” he said, “so let everyone say what he thinks is the cause of my folly; he can judge from the number of silly things I do daily.”

This suggestion made them all laugh, but it was displeasing to Cesare’s brother Serafino, who was something of a wag. He was still in possession of all his fingers, but he

lost four of them some ten years later for a libel against the pope. He wanted to know why women hated men and loved snakes, and said he would himself answer the riddle if Signora Emilia would let him. But as the question seemed to savor of indecency, she passed the word to the "unique" Aretino.

He answered in verse—naturally in homage to the greatest lady present, the duchess. She wore on her forehead a ribbon which had in the center, just beneath the parting of her hair, a small jewel in the form of an "S." This "S" had attracted his eyes for some time past. What did it mean? Suppose everyone said what he thought it signified. He himself gave his answer in a sonnet, so polished that no one believed it an improvisation. In the original almost every word begins with "S," which is difficult to render in a translation:

Consent, O Sea of loveliness and virtue,
To solve a doubt that doth torment thy Servant.
The "S" thou bearest on thy Snow-white forehead,
Pray does it signify my Suffering or Safety?
Does it show Succor or base Servitude?
Secret or Stupid? Suspicious or Secure?
Am I Satisfied or Scolded? Saved or Sepulchered?
Does't hold for me or Sorrow or Solution?
Oh, how I fear that it must be the Symbol
Of Sighs Severe, Superiority,
Of Sanguine Stripes, of Sweat and Supplication,
Of Sheer disdain—but I am mad! The truth
Is that the "S" doth clearly, rightly show
A Single Sun of Sweet Serenity.

This sonnet touched the right note, and warm approval rewarded the poet. But even he had not suggested a

theme for discussion. Several subjects had been mentioned, when suddenly that tried warrior, Signor Fregoso, who could not get the Bologna campaign out of his thoughts, hit upon an idea that pleased everyone. It was that someone should be chosen to describe the perfect cavalier, to enumerate all the requisite qualities and conditions that made a man worthy to be so called. The Signora Emilia quickly decided on the one who seemed the most suited to this task—Count Ludovico da Canossa. She explained her choice slyly:

“You will bring forward some quaintness that we hope will lead to controversy and enliven the game for us all.”

But the count made her pay dearly for this irony.

“There is no fear of unbroken peace where you are, Signora Emilia. You would contradict truth itself.”

And now, with lively chatter, in which all shared, they began to outline the portrait of the perfect cavalier, as the fifteenth century conceived him. Question and answer passed rapidly to and fro. Are birth and rank indispensable? Must he be trained in warlike exercises? Should he have a measure of self-sufficiency? Must he be handsome in face and figure? Is not physical perfection as necessary as spiritual? Yes, but he must have no trace of the effeminate. He should be of middle height, well dressed and well groomed; and, to keep his body graceful and elastic, he should fence, ride, hunt, play ball, and practice all bodily exercises.

But whatever he may do must be done with restraint and discretion. He must have skill in the use of weapons, but must not be so one-ideaed as to become a laughing-

stock like the poor man who, on being asked by a lady what his occupation was, replied: "Fighting." On which the lady retorted:

"Then you had better cover yourself with oil and hang yourself up in an armory, for fear, since there seems no likelihood of war, you may become even rustier than you are now."

What other qualifications must the perfect cavalier have, besides these outward ones? He must read and write well; he must not use too commonplace words but choose them like a scholar, both when talking and writing. His highest adornment must be learning; many examples were quoted in support of this. He must read poetry, history, and rhetoric and must train himself to write both verse and prose, especially in his native tongue, for then he will be able to give pleasure to others, the ladies in particular.

After learning, they spoke of art. Should the cavalier be a musician? Yes, they were nearly all agreed about that. Signor Gaspare thought it an effeminate accomplishment, but he was overruled. Music—it was decided—was not only a charm but a necessity to the cavalier. From music they passed to painting. He must hold this art dear even if he could not practice it himself. The subject of the cavalier's choice of language had led to a general discussion of the Italian language, and to such questions as whether one should borrow from the classics as did Petrarch and Boccaccio, and whether one should give the preference to Tuscan or some other dialect.

The mention of painting also brought about a digression. Which art was the greater, painting or sculpture?

Opinions were divided. Some thought painting the more difficult and some sculpture. One thought carving more durable and therefore of greater worth, another deemed painting nobler and richer.

The talk grew animated. In argument the cavalier and his perfections were forgotten. Then the duchess interfered:

"We have talked enough of the cavalier. Now describe the perfect woman, whose virtues shall be the complement of his. I will entrust this difficult task to you, Signor Magnifico. We all want to be introduced to your lady, arrayed in all her jewels; if you do not present her to us so that all can admire her beauties, we shall think you are jealous."

The Magnifico thanked the duchess for the honor she had done him, but at the same time he complained of the difficulty of his task—saying it would be harder for him to describe an ideal woman of ordinary rank, for whom he had no model, than a lady who might be queen of all the world, since he had the model for such a one before his eyes. With this courteous introduction, he proceeded with his picture of the *gentildonna*. She must be of noble birth, gentle and womanly. This she must show in every movement, and in her speech. She must have pleasant manners free from all affectation, and she must be comely. "*Grazia*" she must have, for in Pindar's words, so often quoted, "that makes all else beautiful and sweet." Grace, that boundless charm of carriage revealed even when sitting, seemed to throw beauty into the shade. It was the criterion of the *gentildonna's* charms.



Baldessare Castiglione
From a painting by Raffael

And her inner qualities? "She must be clever, free from pride and envy, and possess the virtues of nobility, kindness, and modesty. Of course she must be a good housewife and a courteous hostess. She should possess a lively wit, so that she can lead the entertaining of her guests. She must bear a decisive part in the determining of the qualities that go to make the perfect cavalier, for every man who would be respected outwardly and truly must seek to win the favor of a lady, and she must know how to find out whether his love be true or not. That is not difficult for a clever woman. When a cavalier is pouring forth protestations of his love, she must show she understands him, but prudently turn the conversation to another subject. If she is unable to do this, then she must take it all as a jest, and imply that she thinks he has only been paying her compliments and does not mean what he says; for her deserts are not so great and his praise must be mere politeness on his part and not due to any merit on hers. In this way not only will she gain a reputation for modesty but she will be saved from the risk of disappointment; that is how I should wish a lady to receive a declaration of love."

These words led the Magnifico to the theme of love and even those who had before been silent now became animated, for every one of them had something to say on that inexhaustible subject. However, as the hour was now late, the duchess broke up the conversation, and put off this interesting theme till the next evening. As a pleasant ending to the day, she asked for a dance, bidding Madonna Margarita and Madonna Constanza Fregoso to lead it.

Parletta, the delightful musician, started a gay tune, and both ladies, hand in hand, danced a Spanish Bassa and a French Branle.

When they had finished the duchess rose and took affable leave of her guests. One after another, they bowed and withdrew. The servants came to put out the lights. They did not notice that one guest still remained. He stood behind the window curtain and looked out dreamily at the dark silhouette of the Apennines, above which the full moon was shining. He had a dignified figure, and noble features, with a full beard. In the light of the moon his face seemed full of expression. A long time he stood there, like one who is living again in thought an important experience. Suddenly he awoke from his abstraction. He looked round—all was silent and the room was empty. The light of the moon danced ghostlike on the Flemish tapestry. Once more he swept the room with his glance—then he, too, went out to seek his rest. He was the Count Castiglione.

Years after this memorable evening—Duke Guidobaldo was now dead and his sister's son, Francesco Maria della Rovere, reigned in his stead—the count sat in one of the smaller rooms of the castle and wrote busily a voluminous manuscript. They were the first books of the Cortegiano. The idea that had sprung to Count Castiglione's mind as he stood there in the moonlight was being fulfilled after all these years, not in the form of tedious confessions or insipid memoirs—the count took care to keep his own personality in the background—but in the shape of a serious and brilliant dialogue. He erected a

memorial to the great Federigo and his descendants; but, more than this, he set up a living sign-post to the culture of the Renaissance, of which those rooms in the castle of Urbino still speak to the intelligent listener.

VI

The Jovial Vatican

ON the road leading from Civitavecchia to Magliana, a lively company were traveling, taking their way to Trastevere. If the sad tones of Autumn had not been showing over the wide Campagna one might have thought them King Carnival with his fools, they were so irresponsible and gaily-dressed. Cardinals on tall horses were strangely garbed for their spiritual calling. Some of them wore scarlet doublets and high riding boots, with Spanish hats, others had much-ornamented caps or helmets cocked on their heads. A young and very handsome cardinal wore a purple tunic, with golden girdle at his waist; while one gigantic rider, in gold-embroidered cloak with a tiger's skin hanging picturesquely at his back, would have been taken for a condottiere rather than a cleric. He was the Cardinal Federigo Sanseverino, a prince of the church with a love of warlike things, who had taken part in the carnage at Ravenna.

Near him rode Cardinal Bibbiena, whose cunning, sharply cut profile was a contrast to the serious face of Sanseverino. He was telling the riders near him a story of a Roman courtesan with such piquant detail that his listeners' mouths began to twitch, while the pope's secretary, Pietro Bembo, burst into a roar of laughter.

Bibbiena posed as being such a handsome fellow that no woman could resist him; and Bembo may have thought of that evening in Urbino when the cardinal, asked for his opinion of the qualities necessary for the perfect cavalier, had replied:

"I am not quite satisfied with my own figure, for my legs are not so well-shaped as they might be, but I've reason to be content with the rest of my appearance."

Now, as the cardinal sat on horseback, his long legs tucked carefully under the horse's belly, it seemed to the ironical Bembo that his upper part might well have reason to complain of the build of the legs. Yet Bibbiena was not such a laughable figure on horseback as some of the prelates and gray-haired scholars. In contrast to the cardinals, trained in sports, the men of learning sat their saddles awkwardly. Many gazed in deep abstraction at their horses' manes and only awoke from dreams when one of the crowd of fools who ran with the company leaped onto a horse's back with a wild howl. An acrid dispute over a question of grammar made other scholars forget where they were and threatened to unhorse them at any moment.

With their bitter argument mingled the jokes of the fools, the neighing of the horses, and the laughter of the cardinals. Blasts from the trumpets added to the noise, and a pack of some sixty to seventy hounds, with ear-piercing barking, ran in and out of the ranks of archers and beaters, who called and shouted to the dogs. Behind these the long train of wagons heaped with the spoils of the chase made deep wheel-ruts in the soft road and a rabble of poor folk followed noisily contending over any scrap of meat that might fall from the wagons. A troop of strolling players could not have looked more picturesque than this home-returning papal hunting party.

In the middle of the company, a magnificent litter,

flanked by a body of brightly clad halberdiers, bore an ungainly and very fat man of about fifty. The great head was set down on the shoulders, so that there seemed to be no neck. The chin was lost in rolls of fat that formed a sort of frill, and the nape of the neck stuck out at the back of the white doublet like a hump. Under the forehead shone a pair of short-sighted, screwed-up eyes, and on the protruded lips was a supercilious smile—the only sign of life about this lump of flesh. If one had not seen the arms of the Medici on the litter one would have found it hard to believe that this ugly, apparently unintelligent man in the plain gown with the dirty boots was his Holiness Leo X, in person. Little like the idealized portrait Raffael painted of him.

Leo had had a most successful day, for the hunt had been well followed. With admiration he thought of the slaughter his escort had achieved, of stags, deer, hare, and wild boar. He said little himself, but let the crowd of poets and fools celebrate the recent experience in flattering prose and verse. They all knew that the pope, when returning from a successful hunt, could be extravagantly generous in gifts, and many cast covetous eyes on the red silk purse, crammed with gold ducats, that he held in his hands.

The most talkative was Serapico, the pope's inseparable factotum, of whom the sarcastic Aretino said, "From coupling hounds, he had risen to be pope and ruled the world." Serapico trotted beside his master, and the poets eyed him mistrustfully, for they knew the power he had. If he had instructions only to admit amusing people, the valet could choose this or that one as he himself pleased;

for the others the doors of the Vatican would remain closed.

Guido Posthumo was ready to burst with envy, for a poem celebrating the recent hunt in numberless verses was burning on his tongue the whole way; he longed for the moment to declaim it. Perhaps, he thought, he might receive four hundred scudi for it, like Colocci, or even more, for Colocci's poem had only had forty verses and his was over a hundred. But he could not get his chance. Whenever he tried to edge nearer, Fra Mariano, with his silly jests, pushed in between. His Holiness's favorite fool had much to talk about. He delighted the pope by gloating over his own greediness, which he would be satisfying at supper that night; then he recounted his latest culinary discoveries, telling how sausages should be made of peacock's flesh, which seemed to interest the pope more than Guido Posthumo's Ovidian verses.

Now and then Leo called the train to a halt. This happened when a crowd of peasants appeared on the road, to get a sight of the Holy Father and perhaps a chance to kiss his foot. The peasants were not particular—it did just as well if they could kiss his boot. What did it matter to them that the master of ceremonies, de Grassi, was shocked at this unseemliness and worried that his Holiness had come out in such unsuitable footgear? Poor folk with countless children pushed up close and begged for help; marriageable maids pleaded for a dowry; youths who thirsted for knowledge asked for a student's honorarium; the sick told of their troubles, hoping for allayment; each had some plea to make, and all found a hearing. No one

left unsolaced, even though it might be but a couple of ducats that the pope took from the red purse and slipped into the petitioner's hand.

With these constant interruptions, the hunting party slowly neared the walls of Rome. Triumphal arches had been erected in the streets to welcome the home-coming Medici. Sightseers appeared at windows and doors for the pope's return from hunting was an event for the Romans, especially for those who loved plays, good company, and feasting. Folk told marvels of the festivities of welcome, banquets, and suppers, in which the uninvited took a part in imagination. Leo's open-handedness gave rise to thousands of stories, true and false. It was commonly said that a stone could fly through the air of its own accord more easily than Pope Leo keep a thousand ducats. A witty pasquil said that he had squandered three papal fortunes, the private fortune of Julius II, the economies of his reign, and those of his successor.

Naturally the pockets of the Roman citizens had to suffer for this, but they bore the pope no grudge; they were grateful to him for many benefits. He had fixed the price of food-stuffs, encouraged agriculture in the Campagna, cared for the poor, and, above all, beautified the city. On the ruins which had stood for so long forgotten and forlorn, new life was blooming. The Romans, not so long ago scoffed at by the Florentines as a race of cowards, could now remember with pride their old descent.

"One can see," wrote a discontented citizen who did not approve of the changes, "not only fine houses on all sides, but a number of magnificent palaces, with noble

owners who show much outward pomp and go about with beautiful youths in impudent caps, variegated hose, and velvet shoes, and with them a crowd of hangers-on. The women, always idling with music and dancing, do not save their finery for festivals, but go about the streets every day as tricked out and haughty, as scented as if each one expected to mount a throne."

The delirious love of sociability that characterized the Medici had seized upon all, and they sunned themselves in the warmth that shone from the feast-loving Vatican.

"Let us enjoy the papacy that God has given us." If their ghostly Father acted on this advice, why should not the laity do the same? Let us enjoy life, since God has given us this man for pope, was their argument.

The stanze were brilliantly lit. Cardinals, courtiers, poets, scholars, musicians, fools made a brightly colored, constantly moving crowd. They all pressed toward the Stanza dell' Incendio, which many of them had not seen since the new decorations were ready. More from curiosity than real love of art, clerics and laity hurried, in the hope of seeing themselves in the pictures hanging on the walls. Those returned contentedly for whom that hope was fulfilled. But the number who could do so was not great. More were annoyed because they found themselves left out or at best tucked away into a corner. They criticized sharply the new works of the maestro and his "synagogue," as the partizans of Michelangelo mockingly called Raffael's disciples. They found something to disparage either in the color or the technique, and only stopped their maligning

when the trumpets announced that the pope was coming and the banquet about to begin.

All streamed into the Sala di Constantino where the feast was laid. His Holiness took his place at the upper end of the table. He smiled a pleasant greeting, looking at the guests through his glass, while the master of ceremonies, de Grassi, marshaled each to a seat. There was no stiff order of rank at these banquets; prelates of high office sat between artists and poets, cavaliers between musicians and comedians, and no one took exception. Cardinals and statesmen met all with a claim to distinction on an equality. Prince of the church or rich merchant had each his private circle of artists and authors, who hovered round him wherever he went. Ascanio, the nephew of Cardinal Sforza, was famed for the way he went about surrounded by authors.

To Bibbiena's great regret there were no ladies at the court; Julius II had forbidden them the Vatican. Whoever wanted female society had to seek it in the boudoirs of the famous Roman courtezans or at the villas of rich bankers. But for that reason the fun at table was the freer.

Fra Mariano worked hard to keep the entertainment going. His whimsies amused the whole company, and Cardinal Bibbiena, who held the post of unofficial *maitre de plaisir*, assisted him manfully. As a climax to his delightful fooleries, Fra Mariano sprang onto the table and from that position kept up a fire of repartee with the cardinals and bishops. This gave the pope an indescribable pleasure; and his enjoyment reached its height when the greedy "capo di matti," as the unfrocked Dominican was called,

fell to on a specially prepared dish of eel, which, after the half of it had disappeared into the friar's stomach, proved to be a thick piece of rope. The prelates he had mocked had now the laugh on their side.

The hilarity over this joke had scarcely subsided before a fresh diversion started. Camillo Querno, the famous improvisatore, who had just climbed the Roman Parnassus with a poem of chivalry twenty thousand verses long, suddenly appeared dressed as Venus, followed by two Cupids. He recited high-flown verses in honor of the Medici of Rome, and declared that the goddess of love had come down from Olympus to thank the earthly Jupiter for taking such good care of her deserted favorites. The pope was delighted at the tribute and told Serapico to give the arch-poet a purse of gold ducats. Not content with this, he nominated him next day to a professorship in the Roman Studio. Leo did not stint his gifts. He handed out benefices, posts, and titles with great liberality.

Camillo Querno was then allowed to satisfy his inordinate appetite to his heart's content. The range of dishes set before him and the quantity of bottles appeared endless, but the poet's hunger and thirst seemed to have no bounds. Between the courses he had to improvise, but he was firm in refusing to give more than a certain number of verses without a flask of wine as a reward. The bait took. The spring of his imagination seemed never to run dry, and when at last, hoarse with the effort, he croaked a final hexameter:

"Rhymes I can turn out, in truth, like a thousand poets in one!"

The pope promptly capped the line with:

"And you can tipple, my friend, as though you would never be done."

—a retort that was greeted with roars of laughter.

But who could compete with Querno in facile speech? Not Piero Giovanni Ginotto, anxious as he was to outdo his predecessor. His efforts ended in a hopeless mumble. He spoke with a bad stutter in the Bologna dialect, which no one understood, and nearly broke his tongue over the word "Pimpinella." Overwhelmed by jeers and shouts of derision, he lost his head altogether and sank back into his chair, covered with shame. Then the Brescian Marone rose, lute in hand. Talking ceased, for Marone had a great reputation for making a marvelous poem out of the least possible material. All wanted to hear what was coming and especially what theme Marone would choose.

He struck a few chords on his lute, stopped and took up his position. Like Apollo Musagetes he stood, proud and serious, letting his eyes travel over the listeners. Then suddenly he smiled and, striking his fingers across the strings, began to recite. He spoke of the agony of Turkey, the cruelties of the Saracen, the cries of the oppressed for help; he pictured the lust for blood and plunder of Sultan Selim; he lamented the fall of Byzantium, prophesying a like fate for Italy if she did not obey the pope's call and go out against the infidel. He rallied to the flag all who had the weal of Christianity at heart. Their task must be to rescue the Holy Sepulchre and plant the cross on St. Sofia. He spoke at first simply and calmly, his music subdued,

but his words grew in passion and power. Loud rang his tones to a tragic climax, echoed by the swelling chords of his accompaniment.

When it was over he was greeted by an ovation; the pope, however, sat silent, with tears in his eyes. Marone's words had touched his heart, for the poet had voiced his soul's desire—the Turkish campaign, for which he had been working for over a year. His heart overflowed with gratitude; for such a masterpiece Marone must be rewarded with some extraordinary favor. He called him to him and before the company gave him the Archbishopric of Capua, with inviolable tenure. This solemn presentation brought the banquet to an end.

The pope withdrew to the Stanza d'Eliodoro, where a gilded chessboard inlaid with ivory was ready. He loved to amuse himself with a game after meals. His fancy for chess went the length of granting preferment to Canon Marco Girolamo Vida. He had asked him to write an epic in honor of the game; and that he might do so undisturbed he made him prior of the monastery of San Silvestro in Frascati.

On the present occasion his Holiness had chosen the banker Angelo del Buffalo as his antagonist; he was supposed to be a fine player. Fortune was not kind to the pope, who played absent-mindedly, made mistakes, and was at last obliged to turn to other amusements.

A crowd of authors were waiting for the moment when they could have a word with their patrons. Barefaced flatterers like Giovanni Mazzarelli, Jano Vitale, Zanobi Acciajuoli were among them, but there were also real poets like

Tebaldeo and Bembo and scholars like Giovio and Sadoleto. Leo had a word first with one then the other, gave out commissions, suggested subjects on which he would like them to write, chatted of new treasures in his library, made fun of certain persons—in short, behaved more like a man of the world than a churchman.

Bembo was especially favored. The “new Petrarch” had won with his pen the post of private secretary to the pope, but he wanted a cardinal’s hat, a wish later granted by Paul III. Bembo was discontented with the stipend the pope gave him, and thought himself entitled to something more lucrative. He felt oppressed in Rome, in spite of the pope’s favor. His way of life cost a good deal of money; he lent to everyone and had only enough left to live from hand to mouth. His thoughts often went back to the fleshpots of Ferrara, and to his charming patroness there, Lucrezia. But he was anchored in Rome. Only its ancient ruins made him forget financial troubles. No one else of his time so keenly appreciated old Rome. It is due to his influence that Raffael took up the cause so passionately, sending the pope a letter begging him to preserve “the remains of the Mother of Italy’s glory and fame.” The silent witnesses of “those divine spirits, the thought of whom lifts us to heights of inspiration, must not be destroyed by the mischievous and stupid.” The preservation of ancient ruins became a frequent subject of talk with the pope, and he was glad to speak of it both to Bembo and to his favorite, Raffael. Leo was always willing to consider anything that would redound to the credit of his pontificate. Fame was the spur to all his actions.



Pope Leo X with Cardinal Rossi and Giulio de' Medici
From a painting by Raffael

The climax to the evening described was a theatrical performance, the theater having been installed in a room at the Vatican. Leo loved the theater not less passionately than music and the chase. Rome was not behind Ferrara in that respect. Bibbiena's indecent comedy "Calandria" was performed in the papal chamber during Isabella d'Este's stay in Rome. Baldassare Paruzzi did the decorations of the theater where Ariosto's comedies rose from their baptism of fire, Raffael's master hand painting the scenery.

The pope was tonight in the best of humors. He stood at the entrance to the theater and gave his blessing as the spectators came in—that is, when he deemed it suitable. When all had found their places, he ascended five steps to a raised chair facing the stage. On his left and right, the cardinals and dignitaries were stationed. Then the pope gave the signal for the performance to begin.

It was a rustic comedy by Strascino, played by a troupe of Sienese comedians; coarse and boisterous, in the Hans Sachs manner. The burlesque actor blustered about the stage. Two youths, in love with a pretty maid, began to quarrel out of jealousy and a third suggested that the girl herself should arbitrate. But the modest little thing made none of them happy, confessing to yet another lover. This confession having been received with shouts of laughter, a wild dance ended the piece.

The pope and his neighbors were greatly amused, and through his glass his Holiness followed the action of the stage, exchanging satiric comments with Bibbiena, who was sitting by him. Fra Mariano pushed here and there

among the spectators, eternally jesting. Between the acts, in a ballet of allegorical character, like the one that had been danced at the performance of "Calandria," the goddess of love appeared in a car, drawn by doves, which cooed in time to the music. She swung a burning torch in her hand—symbol of the flames of love. Round her danced cupids, also with torches, and one of them declaimed verses in her honor. During the ballet the dancers strewed scented powder on the ground, so that the whole theater was filled with perfume.

After the farce came a new comedy—its première. It was the first work of a monk, and was pretentious and stupid, with no artistic feeling or wit. The author was called onto the stage with ironical shouts. When, believing they meant to applaud him, perhaps give him the poet's crown, he stepped forward to bow his thanks, a storm of jeers and hisses greeted him. The poor monk stood as if turned to stone, till a couple of rough fellows seized him and threw him down on the floor. After that he was tossed in a carpet; his tiebands cut, his hose torn from his legs. While the good father, whose understanding had come back to him, struck out with hands and feet and even bit the hands of his tormentors, he was forced to sit on a servant's back while another whipped him with rods. That was the way Pope Leo punished poets who wrote bad verses. He was highly diverted by the proceeding, finding it a thousand times funnier than the preceding farce. This affair ended the evening and the public, laughing at the rough play, left the room. The monk, who could neither sit nor lie down for pain, was putting leeches on his bruises.

When the pope heard of the suffering of the unsuccessful poet, he sent Serapico to him with a consolatory gift of two ducats.

This theatrical performance was followed on another night by a musical evening. Bernardo Accolti, the well-known singer from Arezzo, was staying in Rome, and it was said that he would sing at the Vatican. Many distinguished people were present on this occasion, for the unique Aretino, as he was always called, was a great attraction. Accolti, who had made a fortune with his singing and improvising, was at the height of his fame. Accustomed to extravagant praise wherever he went, he usually agreed to sing only after much pressing, but he was willing to sing for the pope because he hoped to be made a prince. When Accolti was to sing, crowds of uninvited guests streamed in, even common people, anxious to hear him.

The singer began by improvising a graceful sonnet. In it he compared his love for a beautiful woman to the artichoke; the pointed leaves were like the sharp wounds of love, their fresh green meant that he hoped to be listened to; and in the bitter-sweet taste were the pangs and joys he suffered.

Then he took up his lute and his wonderful, throbbing voice began a hymn to the Mother of God. To his rapt listeners it seemed as if, after long wandering in a thirsty land, they saw a shady tree with a silver spring welling at its foot, and they sat enthralled. The applause broke out like thunder when this song came to an end.

“Long live the divine poet, the inimitable Aretino!”

they cried from all sides. Many demanded that he repeat the song or sing another, but Accolti refused. That hymn was his masterpiece. He knew he could give them nothing better, and he would not spoil its effect.

Toneless and flat seemed the voice of the Vatican singer Bidone de Asti, after Aretino, although Castiglione said of Bidone that he could lift the souls of his hearers to heaven and the other singers, the pick of the pope's choir, could not compare with him. Music sounded through the Vatican until late: songs with orchestral accompaniment, serious alternating with light. The pope sat silent, taking no notice of the cheerful crowd. Even after midnight had long passed and the guests, at his Holiness's command, had gone, the music-loving Medici dreamed on, head sunk, eyes closed, humming softly to himself.

Before the Palazzo Braschi stands a weather-beaten marble statue of Menelaus with the dead body of Patroclus. This torso is to this day called the "Pasquino," after a humanist who had had the idea of giving publicity to his writings—his means not allowing him to pay for any other form of publication—by sticking them up on the statue. The example of this poor wretch was followed by others, at first students and young authors and then writers of some name. The statue during the reigns of Julius and Leo was a sort of public reading-room. It began to play the part of mirror of the times, for here, unhindered by censor or judge, one could give vent to one's private opinions. On this statue, which was sometimes clothed in wondrous garments, was to be read one morning the following epigram:

Flock hither, poets and songsters, from all the ends of the earth,
For here in Rome is ruling Leo, the earthly God.
To each he offers shelter, on each heaps gifts of good fortune;
Truly on Mount Parnassus this is the Golden Age.

It was a strange whim of Fate that, at the very hour
in which this panegyric was being fixed to Pasquino's
statue, Leo's greatest enemy, the armorer's son from Eisle-
ben, was nailing to the door of the chapel of Wittenberg
Castle the thesis that was to convulse the world.

Farnesina

IF the Past still speaks anywhere, it speaks in the Villa Farnesina, that enchanting structure built by the Rothschild of the Renaissance, Agostino Chigi, in the years 1509 and 1510, on the right bank of the Tiber, hard by the Porta Settimana. Almost fearfully that little summer villa looks out over the high ivy-covered walls, through a screen of cypresses, evergreen oaks, and laurels, as if it would like to hide from the gaze of passers-by. Yet in spite of this game of hide-and-seek, it invites the stranger to enter and tempts him to linger. If he wanders through the sleepy garden, picking his way carefully through the labyrinth, pausing now and then by the silent fountains, looking about at the moss-grown grottoes and pedestals, he might think himself in a lonely paradise, away from the world—the green of the plants in a wild growth the only thing that speaks of life.

Yet this place of deathly quiet was once one of the wonders of the Eternal City. The noblest in Roman society once followed its leafy paths, watched its splashing fountains, jested, laughed, made love. Here extraordinary banquets took place; delicacies of the rarest kind were served on gold and silver plate—Byzantine fish, parrots' tongues. A luxury reigned here which to us seems fabulous.

Little remains to indicate this vanished past. Everything seems to be rotting and fading. The loggia with the Raphael frescoes of the story of Cupid and Psyche, which were the delight of contemporaries and which, even to Goethe in 1787, seemed the finest he had seen, has lost its wonder;

the frescoes now look sober and cold. Marvelous they must have been once, when open to the garden with the sun shining on them; marvelous too in the moonlight, when the laughter of women floated in and the ashes of roses scented the halls, while poets sang the love of Cupid and Psyche to the lute; then the pictures on the walls in the half-light must have come to life. But this can be realized only by those who are able to imagine them without Maratta's tasteless restoring, and by those who can call up the past in all its rich vitality.

It is easier to do this in the northern loggia, where Raffael's masterpiece, the "Triumph of Galatea," is to be found. The colors have faded even here, but the line, the perfect composition, the grace of the central figures, remain. In a language that appeals to mind and soul, they tell us, as do the Psyche frescoes, of the life that once triumphed in these rooms. We meet no saints or martyrs, no madonnas here; the gods of the old Greeks claimed the admiration and love of the men who came to the house of the hospitable Chigi. The newborn cult of classic thought found a home in this house, as nowhere else in Rome.

Julius II gladly came to Farnesina, even when his own instinct for fine painting was still undeveloped. He often remained for the day, staying to dinner and supper. For practical reasons he wished to be on friendly terms with Chigi; his wars needed money, and only the rich Sieneſe could supply it. Chigi had three great business houses and more than a hundred affiliations in Europe and Africa.

Twenty thousand men worked in his banks. He once let Julius have four hundred thousand ducats free of interest, and received in return the title of "magnifico" and permission to add the name of "dei Rovere." Julius's successor Leo X, whose extravagance was proverbial, could not do without Chigi; and the man who loved luxury was attracted by the fabulous expenditure represented by every entertainment given at Farnesina.

In Rome, as in Venice, they loved a good feast. Paul Veronese's imposing panels give a lively picture of such carouses. Though there was no Veronese in Rome, there was no lack of writers, who described the banquets in every detail. Those given by Cardinal Pietro Riario, the favorite nephew of Sixtus IV, were celebrated. One was given in honor of the so-called king of Macedonia; a riotous, carnival feast, in which all the leading nobles and clerics of Rome took part. The dining hall was gorgeous with rich fabrics; hundreds of candles and torches streamed with light; and servants in crimson liveries handed round silver and gold dishes of food, each course being announced by the steward from his rostrum.

Even finer was the banquet the cardinal gave in honor of a lady of Ferrara, the duchess Eleonora of Aragon, when she passed through Rome. The most jaded gourmand would feel his mouth water at the account of the titbits which appeared at table on these occasions in a succession of no less than forty-four courses. The chroniclers tell us of hare, venison, and veal cooked together; of the game—peacock, crane, pheasant—which were served in their feathers; of golden bread; of fishes with silver scales; of

sugar erections that reproduced mythological scenes; of the finest fruits, tarts, sweetmeats, and wine. Recitation, song, and dance filled the intervals between the courses. The meal lasted six hours.

When the Cardinal Riario set such an example he found imitators, and every host tried to give his banquet an original air. The most extraordinary was that given by the banker, Lorenzo Strozzi. He had the room hung with black, and decorated with skulls. When the guests entered this strange room they felt icy-cold, for in the middle was a table piled with bones. The servants quickly cleared this away, and under the ghastly bones the delicacies were to be seen. The host told them all not to be deterred by the strange reception, but the horror lay so heavy on their spirits that they could not eat. Only the never-satisfied Fra Mariano attacked the food with his accustomed gusto and eagerly pounced on the best morsels. The others did not breathe freely until they had left that death-chamber and had moved into the next room, where the ceiling of azure-blue and the lavish arrangements of flowers made a fairy kingdom.

What happened whenever Fra Mariano was at table, we gather from the picture drawn for us by the tutor of young Prince Federico Gonzaga, when a hostage in Rome. Stazio Gadio describes a meal given by Cardinal Gonzaga under the supervision of Fra Mariano and the courtesan Albina. Gadio sent an account of the doings in Rome to the marchesa, and he tells her that he cannot enumerate all that happened at that feast, but only the "mild" extravagances.

"During the second course," he writes, "cooked fowl flew from the monk to the priests, right across the table, so that their faces and clothes became smeared with the sauces and gravy. What happened after the meal your Excellency may imagine for yourself. Signor Federigo knew how to take their jokes politely. About five they all went home. I think Albina went with Cardinal Cornaro, for she was making up to him noticeably."

Things were more decent at Agostino Chigi's banquets, to which Federigo was also invited. One can see that from the following description by a contemporary:

"All kinds of meat were brought to table and then one present rose to take his place before Signor Federigo and recite verses in his honor before every course. When the meal came to an end, a lute player came, and after that an orchestra, and they played on violins and sang. With such entertainment they rose from table and went to other pleasures, waiting for them in the arbors."

But in one respect Chigi's banquets were like Cardinal Riario's—in their magnificence. At one feast every guest was served on silver plates on which his own arms had been engraved. This luxury was carried even further when the pope and his clerical staff were present at another feast given by the banker after his parting with the beautiful Andreosia. For it rare fish from levantine waters and from the coasts of France and Spain had been brought to Rome living. The colors of these lovely fish vied with the splendor of the gold and silver dishes, which the host, the meal over, threw into the Tiber. Gossip said that the sly Siense had had nets spread under the water to catch the falling

dishes. If so, this apparently spendthrift act was nothing but a specious pretense, such as only the thirst for renown of a man of the Renaissance could have conceived. At any rate the banker managed to make all Rome talk about his banquet, and amazing tales were told of his riches. Contemporary writers have decked the fables in added embroidery of their own. Bowing the knee to the Golden Calf was as popular an exercise then as it is today.

But Chigi was not the man to be content with such questionable reputation. He showed himself many-sided, devoting much of his spare time to history and Greek literature. His love for poetry, music, and painting was shown in his munificent awards to the creators of masterpieces. His ambition was to rival the pope and cardinals as patron of the arts. Even as they, he had a houseful of authors fluttering round him and singing the praises of his miraculous wealth.

But it was not literature, as at the Vatican, but painting that was most honored at Farnesina. The Vatican was almost closed to painters. Only Raffael held a special place, finding welcome everywhere. The reason is to be found in the mean opinion held of artists as men of learning. They were looked upon as craftsmen, without humanistic knowledge or social polish. They had no Latin, and that alone was sufficient to put them beyond the pale. Chigi was not influenced by such judgments. He not only adorned his house with paintings and statues, but kept up friendly relations with the painters and sculptors whom he employed, inviting them to his *al fresco* meals and banquets.

He was bound to Raffael in a peculiar intimacy, esteeming him both as a friend and as an artist—until a dawning love for the beautiful Fornarina roused Raffael's jealousy. There were other little differences too, with regard to remuneration. On one occasion Michelangelo was called in to arbitrate. Chigi contended that Raffael had charged too much for the frescoes in the Chapel of S. Maria della Pace. In spite of his dislike for Raffael, Michelangelo settled the matter in his favor. No less friendly were Chigi's relations with Raffael's disciples, Giulio Romano and Francesco Penni, to whom he owed the delicious little pictures in the Cupid and Psyche frescoes. The Lombard, Sodoma, who painted, for Chigi's bedchamber, the mock-heroic marriage of Alexander the Great with the beautiful Roxana, was in high favor for a time. There were many others: Baldassare Peruzzi, responsible for the magnificent painted ceiling in the Galatea loggia; Sebastiano del Piombo, who painted the Polyphemus who looks so lovingly at Galatea; Giovanni da Udine; Lanzetto; Girolamo da Gabbio; Bernardino da Viterbo—all were welcome guests at Farnesina. Only Michelangelo was missing. It was said the proud maestro held aloof deliberately, because Chigi was a friend of Raffael.

At Chigi's villa, there was no lack of the feminine element, which Cardinal Bibbiena so greatly missed at the Vatican. It comprised ladies of easy virtue—courtezans as they were called then—who would hardly have been received in society nowadays; the moral code of the Renaissance differed considerably from modern standards. Not that a courtesan should be confounded with our present-



Pietro Arctine

day prostitute. They usually belonged to the respectable middle classes, and were often better educated than some ladies of high degree. The novelist Bandello describes a number of them—their days taken up with the study of literature and learning and their nights sold to the god of love. Pietro Aretino, who knew more about courtezans than any of his contemporaries, declared that Madrema, a much-courted demimondaine, for whose favors dukes, statesmen, and cardinals were rivals, had committed to memory Petrarch and Boccaccio, with many Latin poems by Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and others.

Charming Imperia, said to have been immortalized by Raffael in his Transfiguration, was equally renowned. The most distinguished men in Rome, poets such as Sadoletto and Bembo, scholars, artists, and even fastidious Count Castiglione, were said to have placed their homage at her feet. With her charming singing to the lute, she sang herself so deeply into Chigi's heart that he built a fine palace for her, and after her early death raised to her memory a beautiful mausoleum, still wonderfully well preserved.

No less a favorite in Roman society was Tullia, the daughter of Cardinal d'Aragona and Giulia Ferrarese—whose period of splendor fell in the days of the Borgias. Tullia had so much beauty, fascination, and grace, and dressed so well, that she embodied the Roman ideal of feminine perfection, as Lucrezia Borgia had done twenty years earlier. Her fair hair and warm, sparkling eyes, both cardinals and literati celebrated in ecstatic verse. In the art of singing to the lute she surpassed Imperia. When she wanted to cast her spell over a company she danced, while

she sang. "Alma Sirena," the Roman cavaliers called her, and she was so highly esteemed that every noble youth thought it his duty to draw his sword if she was insulted. This chivalrous enthusiasm came to an end, however, when it became known that she had received a rich German in her chamber. Her halo was instantly extinguished, and she had to leave Rome.

There were many renowned courtezans in Rome. Satirical Aretino maintained that churches were well attended on Sundays on that account. "For when Lorentina goes to church," he says, "she is attended by a swarm of the highest in the land—marquises, ambassadors, and dukes—in addition to her retinue of ten waiting women and as many pages and serving wenches. When Beatrice goes to church her following includes at least as many noble signors—Don this and Don that and Don the other. La Graeca has her counts and cardinals. . . ."

Most of these ladies took part in the festivities at Farnesina, for Chigi was a notorious ladies' man, and had many tender adventures.

Did some inamorata of his sit as a model for the admired Galatea, whose upturned eyes, gazing far over the sea, are brimming with hopeless love? The frescoes on the walls might tell us more about the light, alluring women, who once graced these rooms. Who knows? The fountains in the garden have run dry, the arbors and grottoes have fallen into decay, or they might whisper many a forgotten secret of their triumphs.

Venetian Courtezans

IN his "Travels in Italy," Stendhal tells an amusing little story of an occurrence in Venice. A tragedy was being played in the Teatro San Moisè, and in it was a scene in which the Tyrant handed his sword to his son with instructions to kill the daughter-in-law. The audience were so indignant at this sinister command that they rose to demand that the sword be taken away. On which the young prince had to come down to the footlights and calm their outraged feelings. He assured them that he did not at all share his father's murderous impulses, and he gave his word that, if his esteemed patrons would kindly sit down for ten minutes, they should see him set about to rescue his wife.

This anecdote is characteristic of the emotional Venetians. There is probably no place in the world where secret crime is so much practiced as in this city of the waters; but a public murder of a beautiful woman, even if merely on the stage, overwhelms the light-hearted islanders. So it was in Stendhal's time, and so it was some two or three hundred years before. One might take what one pleased from the Venetian—except his gay spirits.

There is a sultriness about this town not found elsewhere. Wandering the maze of narrow footpaths, which lose themselves in blind alleys, one thinks of the kingdom of Circe and expects every moment to see the working of her magic. Nixies sing from the depths and stretch out longing arms to him who glides in a gondola over the dark waters. Everywhere the god of love seems waiting

to ensnare the poor stranger. This fairylike city, with her bizarre construction, her shimmering palaces, her majestic towers, her labyrinthine canals and discreet nooks, the singing of the gondoliers, the enchantingly beautiful women, is fated to be the home of love. Even in the Venetian artists, in Titian, Giorgione, Paul Veronese, this joy in color and physical beauty, and recognition of love's power, are evident, reaching the highest point in Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love." And in Venice lives the memory of the man who, through Feuerbach's painting, is the perfect type of the Sybarite—Pietro Aretino.

The part that purchased love played in Venice can be seen in the notes of the chronicler, Sanuto. His statistics tell us that of the 300,000 souls who dwelt in Venice in 1509 no fewer than 11,654 were demimondaines. The senate must have been proud of these daughters, for they are referred to as *le nostre benemerite meretrice*. In the sixteenth century Venice was the haven of courtezans. They came from everywhere, even from Rome, if they happened through some indiscretion to forfeit the favor of the gilded youth there, as did beautiful Tullia of Aragon. Andrea Calmo's entrancing picture of Venice was drawn for a Roman lady he wished to entice there:

"I would show you how you can go in a gondola, or in a coach if you prefer dry land. I would invite you to secret revels and feasting where you would be a queen—a Penthesilea. If you wished to enter into business relations with a monsignore, I should not stand in your way. I can only beg you to come to Venice, for no sooner is a strange face seen here than everyone is after the lady. You have such

a charming way of speaking, such pretty ways, such a lovely walk, that even a heart of iron would melt for love of you. According to the season of the year you will be serenaded or a little comedy be played beneath your windows. You will have such merry entertainment, such gifts of sugar-plums or other excellent things, that you will sing for joy. And all in honor of your beauty, and to the credit of your renown."

Not all the 11,654 priestesses of Venus were as charming and clever as Tullia d'Aragona, but there were many who were accomplished women and gave a tone to society. The most influential was Veronica Franco; that in the catalogue of "the most estimable courtezans of Venice" she is down as number 204 did not prevent her keeping up a house of some consequence, at which all the artists and literati of Venice were constantly to be found. One cannot understand how, in spite of the very low price she placed on her charms—she sold herself for two scudi—she managed to live in so grand a style. Perhaps the low price was only for the benefit of her literary friends, and people of greater standing had to dive more deeply into their purses. Henry II of France, on a visit to Venice, when only twenty-three, had to pay heavily for an hour in Veronica's chamber; yet it is said that during his eight days' stay he did not pass one night at his palace, but was always slipping away through those back streets to the quarter of San Giorgio Crisostimo, where so many desirable ladies were to be found.

One can gather a very fair idea of the magnificence of their salons from the contemporary accounts. Every luxury

was to be found there. The rooms were designed to ensnare the senses with beauty; the walls were hung with heavy silk or velvet, on the floors lay costly carpets; vases of alabaster, porphyry, and serpentine adorned the inlaid tables; majolica and artistic things of all kinds decorated the walls. In Veronica's salon the Spanish ambassador, having need of a cuspidor, spat in a servant's face, saying as excuse:

"I am sorry, but it is the only ugly thing here."

Veronica Franco must have been a very beautiful woman. One of her admirers celebrates her golden-yellow hair, her divine eyes, and wonderful complexion. Tintoretto painted her, but the picture has unfortunately disappeared. The famous painter was one of her most ardent admirers. She got from him her critical knowledge of art, which she was proud of displaying in her letters. Among the authors, Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, was her greatest friend. She took his opinion of her own poetic attempts—for she followed the fashion and wrote sonnets, which show more talent than those of many ladies of the period. Veronica was always ready to learn, and gave preference to men of brains.

"You know," she wrote once to one of her young admirers, "that the type of man who most takes my fancy is one who is disciplining himself in the practice of the arts—which I, though a woman of little learning, esteem highly—and who realizes that it is my earnest desire to learn, and, as far as my circumstances permit, to spend my time at school with accomplished men."

This explains Veronica's desire to have about her men

of note. She invited to her house every author of repute who visited the city—if possible to a big reception, where there was usually discussion of literary and philosophical matters, in the intervals of which the charming hostess sang, but, if not, then to a more intimate supper. The only complaint from a guest is from Montaigne, who brought away from one such supper a bad pain in his stomach—surely more the fault of the cook than of the hostess.

When this famous French essayist visited the Franco—it was in 1580—she was no longer at the height of her beauty. As with many other lovely sinners, so with her; the worm of remorse was gnawing her soul and taking away all her charm. She founded a home for ladies of light virtue and could not enjoy her own foundation long, for death soon came for her.

When Tullia d'Aragona, as already related, made Rome impossible for herself through her folly, she came, after a short halt at Ferrara, to Venice. The charming blonde was not received with the enthusiasm which welcomed most newcomers. Although Sperone Speroni, professor at the Padua University, entered the lists for her and in a dialogue on love compared her with a heroine of old, placing her on an equality with Sappho, she had little success in Venice. The reason for this was Pietro Aretino.

This greatly feared condottiere of the pen not only was a protector of the homeless, of poor girls with babies, of debtors who could not pay and ruined merchants, of escaped prisoners and nobles come down in the world, and

of hungry poets, but was, before all, the patron of courtezans. Tullia had not the luck to please him and so could hope for no career in Venice. She did the best she could in quickly shaking the dust of the ungrateful city from her feet and traveling to Sienna. Here she married a Ferrarese citizen of lowly position, so that she could continue her career under the mantle of a married woman.

The thing that is strange in this affair is the great influence of Aretino, but when one remembers the important place the cobbler's son from Arezzo who started life as a bookbinder's apprentice had won for himself—a place he owed to his caustic wit—it is understandable. Never has an author been more adored or feared. Princes, dignitaries, clerics of high standing, authors, and artists all bid for his friendship, not altogether from liking, but partly from fear that he would make them the butt of his sarcasm, or perhaps because they wanted his help against their enemies.

"I am the oracle of Truth," he once wrote, "for everyone tells me the wrongs he suffers from such and such princes and prelates. I am the correspondent of the whole world."

From all sides gifts arrived for him, money, cloth of gold, pictures, art treasures, so that his princely rooms in the house of Domenico Bolia near the Rialto would scarcely hold them. Immeasurable self-importance was the consequence of these equivocal favors.

"My picture can be seen over the palace doors," he boasts in a letter. "My head decorates tankards, plates, and the frames of mirrors, like the heads of Alexander,

Cæsar, and Scipio. A certain type of glass, made in Murano, is called the Aretino vase. A breed of horse has taken my name because Pope Clement VII gave me one of that breed, which I sold again to Duke Federigo. The water which passes along one side of my house is known as the Aretino. My women want to be called Aretinian. They speak of an Aretinian style. The pedants may die of rage, for they'll not achieve such honor."

Aretino's wealth, gathered by his aggressive literary methods, exercised a spell over all the needy, who knew he could be open-handed. His friends carried off his costly clothing and objets d'art. When he went out in his gondola boys and girls collected on the bridges and landing-stages to beg from him; when a woman was with child she asked him for help, and received it; when an author or painter got to his last penny he at once thought of Pietro Aretino.

"To tell the truth, my dear fellow," he writes to one of his friends, "I have not one left of the twenty-five thousand scudi that the prince gave me as tribute to my pen. They have just run through my fingers. How can I help it? Being as I am, how can I alter my way of life?"

The "casa Aretino" was like a pigeoncote. The marble steps were worn with the many visitors, or so said Aretino. Twenty-two women, some of them courtezans, but honest girls also and mothers with nurslings, he harbored at one time in his palace. He was always as generous and hospitable with these as if among intimate friends—to whom he had to flee now and then when it became unbearable at home.

Everyone who has been to Venice knows the fine Palazzo Loredan on the Grand Canal, nearly opposite the church of San Silvestro. Many different styles of architecture are united in the building. The traditional Byzantine is mixed with Lombard, and a Moorish influence can be seen in the slender pillars and the height of the pilasters. In that house there then resided "the most beautiful, most charming woman in Cupid's train," the courtesan Angela Zafetta. Her salon, like Imperia's, was of royal splendor, with Flemish and Turkish carpets, brocade and leather hangings, carved furniture, gold-embroidered velvet covers, pictures, vases, and beautifully bound books. There were frescoes in some of the rooms, by the most famous painters of Venice. Zafetta, like the Duchess of Mazarin later, had a great fancy for animals, birds, and monkeys, but they were not allowed to go free as they were in St. James. An invitation to Zafetta's salon was not easy to get. Only gentlemen of the highest station or prelates or men of learning or renown were received. And even they had to wait in the antechamber, as if at a royal audience, until the lady chose to appear.

The only one who found an open door at any time was Pietro Aretino, and he remained a close friend of Angela's even to old age. When they had both passed the zenith of their lives, he went to see her often and took his friend Titian there for supper now and then. The old rake had now become a gourmand, finding his only remaining pleasure in a well-served table. Over a glass of exceptionally good wine the three old friends would discuss, not love and the beauty of women as of yore, but—the Gospel according to St. Mark.

IN Ferrara, in the late autumn of the year 1565, the palace of the Estes was brilliant in festal garments donned in honor of Barbara of Austria, who had just made her entry into the town as the second wife of Alfonso II. Many decades had passed since Lucrezia Borgia wore the crown of Ferrara. Of those who then had floated gaily on the wave of life scarcely one was still alive. So much had changed since then—ways of thought and of living, fashions and manners.

When the one-eyed Giulio d'Este was at last released from prison on the petition of his mother, he was stared at as a museum piece, for his clothing after the French style was out of date, the Spanish mode now ruling in Italy. In many other ways the change was noticeable. A certain furtive air and look of fearful oppression, as if terror of some grim Elemental weighed on all spirits, betrayed the dread of the Inquisition, which under Paul IV and his successors spread its black wings over the whole of Italy. In Ferrara too it lurked in lanes and houses, and woe to him who was seized by that clutching hand.

In the hearts of many Ferrarese still lived the memory of the good Duchess Renata, who protected Protestants and, being suspected of heretical leanings, narrowly escaped torture and death herself. Anyone secretly inclined to the new religion was filled with anxiety and dared not confess it, for the duke had declared that he would as soon live among lepers as among Huguenots. But in one respect the Ferrarese were unchanged, in spite of their

dread of rack and stake; in their love for company and pleasure.

Ferrara was again preparing for a wedding in its reigning family. The whole population was astir. They knew what such weddings in the palace of the Estes meant—a succession of goodly days, banquets, tourneys, balls, theatrical performances, and many another pleasure which would cost a mint of money and plunge the dukedom into debt. The expenditure this time might not equal that for the wedding of Lionello with Margherita Gonzaga, or of Alfonso I with Lucrezia Borgia. There is no chronicler of the roasting of one thousand oxen and calves, forty thousand fowl and the use of fifteen thousand pounds of sugar in the kitchen, as was ordered at the wedding of Lionello with Maria of Aragon. But still the cost of all these entertainments was great. Gorgeous processions passed through the streets, in which amphitheaters were erected for knights to break a lance or two; in the empty spaces performances had been ordered for the people's benefit; in the castle they hurried from banquet to ball and from ball to banquet and concert; so did one pleasure wait upon another's heels. Then suddenly came the news of the death of Pius IV, and it had so depressing an effect that the entertainments were largely curtailed.

In the tumult, in the sea of jewels and gorgeous dresses, a youth wandered, whose own clothing seemed out of place. He was tall and thin, and on his high forehead his hair lay flat—dusky blond hair, not luxuriant. His long features ended in a pointed chin, sparsely covered with down. A large but well-cut nose slightly mitigated the

ruggedness of the features, the jutting cheekbones and haggard cheeks. The eyes were painfully short-sighted, as if they hid a brooding secret. His long arms and legs got in his way. He was awkward and ungainly, whether walking or standing, and he went timidly through the wide halls and gardens, stopping every now and then to stare at the guests, like one newly come to Paradise and not quite sure whether he is awake or dreaming. There was something mistrustful, abstracted, and uneasy in this man. At times there flamed in his eyes a desire to escape from the hell of the shy and mingle in the bustling throng—then suddenly he would shrink and creep into some corner.

The youth had caught the attention of the court ladies. They came round him with gay impudence and demanded to be noticed, their interest in the stranger becoming almost affectionate. When they learned that his name was Torquato Tasso and that he had come to Ferrara, on the invitation of Cardinal Luigi d'Este, to find a quiet home there after some years of restless wandering, their curiosity changed to delight. The author of *Rinaldo*, as court poet to the Estes, would be an acquisition to palace life. They cast eyes at him, praised his talent, and cajoled him with flattery.

To Tasso this flood of tender looks, smiling glances, and sweet words was intoxicating. It was new to his experience. At first he seemed suspicious, but that soon vanished. He began to fit himself to his company, shook off his reserve, and soon found himself at home in the rôle of admired poet. With an assured composure he now walked through the halls, receiving the homage of the ladies.

From then onward Tasso seemed to be under a lucky star. Although there was seldom more than a ducat or two in his purse, and that dependent on the whim of the cardinal, and although he had to give up the privilege of sitting at the ducal table and content himself with plain fare, still he was happy. He was made so by the friendship of the two princesses, Lucrezia and Leonora, of which he was very proud. Lucrezia, the elder, was not likely to turn any man's head with her appearance, but she knew how to dress, and her manner gave her a certain charm; one forgot she was ugly. Moreover, she had brains and knowledge. Her teacher had been Olympia Morato, one of the cleverest and most learned women of the Renaissance, who when only fifteen could translate Homer and Virgil. From her Lucrezia had her knowledge of classical literature, and with some understanding of philosophy, and much native wit, she could discuss serious subjects intelligently. But her character was not a noble one. She was immoral, intolerant, given to intrigues, and had something Satanic about her. Tasso did not mind these defects. Though not in love with her, he pleaded with her as a lover. He praised her deep blue eyes, her rosy lips—which she did not possess—and likened her to Aurora, whose rays dip heaven and earth in gold. He joined the ranks of the court of flatterers and cringing hangers-on, declaring that she was the loveliest of the lovely.

To tell the truth he had neither for Lucrezia nor for the younger Leonora any deep liking, although the latter made the greater impression on him. She was clever, well-instructed, and gentle. She had womanly qualities, far

more than her sister, and just the ones to inspire Tasso's genius. He could not fail to be inspired by a lady of whom the Ferrarese poets sang that there was not a heart but quickened its beat on her appearance. As for the great passion certain biographers of the poet have imagined, there was nothing of that sort. It was a life-long friendship.

Tasso was a frequent guest to the salon of the two princesses. A cheerful social spirit pervaded it. They talked of serious things, then laughed, joked, and made music. The Estes had always been musical. The princesses had been taught from early childhood to play the lute; and they played it with a real love of the art, especially Lucrezia. Leonora had a beautiful voice and entertained her guests often with her songs. Every sonnet or madrigal that Tasso wrote was at once set to music by Luzzaschi, the leader of the court orchestra, and performed in the princesses' salon.

That salon was Tasso's world. Here he was honored as the greatest poet of his day; here he read his poems, talked about Homer, commentated Virgil, while the princesses and court ladies listened with eager ears to what he said, in spite of the fact that he stammered. His speech had wings only when he was speaking of love. On that theme the ban laid on his utterance seemed to vanish. With life-like colors he painted a lover's pain, struggle, despair, and triumph. And in inspired words he told the tale of the man forced to leave his beloved. The ladies did not always agree with him. Sometimes there was eager contradiction, when he contended that men love with more warmth and constancy than women. This the fair poetess,

Orsina Cavaletti, would by no means admit; and when Tasso defended his views in a course of fifty brilliant theses delivered in the Academy of Ferrara, she was the only one who opposed him with fire and spirit.

Not that the rest of the ladies took Tasso's contentions very seriously. In Ferrara they did not take love seriously. The poet himself confirmed them in their views. He fluttered like a butterfly from flower to flower. The court ladies were nearly all devoted to him, if merely from vanity, since each wanted to get from him a verse or a motto, and longed to have him sing her praises. How they flattered him! His heart seemed wax; it melted at the dove's eyes of an innocent girl just as readily as under the inviting glances of experienced matrons. He gave his verses away right and left, gratifying one lady with a witty madrigal, secretly pressing a sonnet into the hand of another, now pouring out burning passion and now laughing at his own charmer.

In the garden, on the balcony, everywhere they pressed about him, either to clasp his hand or whisper into his ear, or beg a kiss of him. Some of them enticed and allured until they had their way with him. And he, under the storm of caresses, trifled and joked, with this one and that, giving none the preference, pleasing everyone with a few verses and asking only:

"Si vuoi per ch'ami, ama tu me, facciamo
L'Amor d'acordo . . ."

The little town of Comacchio received, in the February of 1577, a terrible shock which affected the whole

population. The ducal court had decided to celebrate carnival elsewhere than in the palace. And while the citizens were still rubbing their sleepy eyes and shaking unbelieving heads, the horses of the unexpected guests were heard on the highway. The coaches with the ladies followed after, and at the tail came a medley of servants, followers of all sorts, fools, actors, dwarfs, musicians, tight-rope dancers, athletes, conjurors, and others needed for carnival enjoyment.

The little town was as if transformed. Laughter, shouts, howls filled the air until one could not hear oneself speak. Groups of maskers kept dancing down the narrow, twisting streets. Among the crowd of fantastically dressed revellers one man in fool's costume attracted the attention of the citizens because of his huge size and impudent behavior. He would push into the crowd pursuing pretty women, who ran from his embrace shrieking; then he would terrify a couple of harmless old women, dealing out coarse jests and pranks right and left, and behaving with less restraint than any other.

It was the duke himself. He held the scepter with rigid sternness, suppressing every attempt at freedom of action on the part of his subjects, but here he behaved as he pleased, every barrier down between himself and his people. By his affability during such adventures as this he assuaged the discontent of his people, who had to bear the burden of his love of pomp and luxury. Extravagance during the carnival time was accounted a virtue in him. He dealt out large sums with a free hand. But at other times he could be so mean and grudging that even his

favorite Tasso was often denied, though he begged only a garment.

The carnival brought with it a riot of fun. In an empty space ropes were stretched and rope-dancers showed off their dangerous skill before the admiring crowd. Athletes tested their herculean strength in bouts of wrestling in the rings. Youths and girls ran races, receiving as prizes rich stuffs and lengths of silk. It was not easy for the girls; if one of them ventured too near the bystanders she was seized and tossed in a blanket—"high enough to see Venice," as they said.

The more refined amused themselves with concerts, balls, and theatrical performances. Tasso, who had come with the court to Comacchio, had written a comedy for the carnival, the actors being ladies and gentlemen of the court. The duke was given the rôle of a tapster. The performance was a great success, owing to the appearance of two pretty women, Countess Barbara Sanseverino di Sala and her even more beautiful daughter-in-law, Countess Leonora Sanvitale di Scandiano. They had both come to Ferrara recently from Rome and had won the hearts of all the men with their charming manner and intelligence. Tasso, who was very susceptible, was flaming with love of them. Though he had determined rivals in the poet Guarini and various courtiers, he waged a bold fight with passionate and ecstatic sonnets, which won him Leonora's favor.

Courted as she was, she made no secret of her liking for Tasso. She sought him out, drew him into conversation, laughed with him and praised him above all the other

poets. This served to heighten the smoldering jealousy with which they had watched Tasso's growing fame. Battista Guarini, author of the "Pastor fido" which the duke liked so much, who held a place of some power at the court, raged at the success of this young man, whereas a man of his age, married and the father of several children, had, as he thought, far more right to the favors of the countess. Round him collected other discontented rivals, among them the duke's secretary of state Antonio Montecatino, Orazio, a nephew of the great Ariosto, and the diplomat Giraldini, of whom it was jokingly said in Ferrara that he was born a Jew in Sienna and baptized a donkey in Ferrara. They all breathed vows of revenge and waited for the chance to set off like a pack of hounds to the hunting of Tasso.

But the poet was on firm ground. He realized the ill wishes of his enemies, but behaved as if he did not heed them. He would not mix wormwood with the delights of carnival, until he saw that he had a more dangerous rival in the person of the duke, who was contesting for the favor of the countess. He grew gloomy. But, common sense returning to him, he saw that to fight such a rival would not be to his advantage, and so he cast off the dark mood and threw himself into the merriment of the carnival. If he could no longer lay his homage at the feet of the countess, there was still her pretty Olympia. He now dedicated his ecstatic verse to her and raised her to the position of his Muse. But one can trace these emotional experiences in an undertone of pain, deep and inward, such as only a longing for lost happiness can give.

Oh, thou, the chosen child of love and charm,
Thrice happy maid!
'Tis thine to serve her—*her*—a goddess sure!

So the carnival festivities drew to an end in Comacchio. Ash Wednesday dawned, gray and forbidding, calling pious and frivolous alike to meditation and penance. The boisterous duke was changed once more into the stern ruler, humble servant of the Papal Chair. The riot of gaiety came to an end. As suddenly as it arrived, the cavalcade was gone. And the little town sank again into its wintry silence.

Trouble gathered over Tasso. From all sides the threatening clouds drew near. Even the confidence which the friendship of the princesses had so far justified began to be shaken. They met him with marked coldness after the carnival in Comacchio. Whether mischievous tongues or jealousy over his love affair were the cause none can say. But the poet's heart was torn by this changed behavior; he felt himself robbed of his last support, and a nervous restlessness seized him. The old suspicion of his fellows broke out again. He had suffered before from persecution hallucinations, brought on by fear of the Inquisition, a fear which had led him to submit his great epic to the editing of the church censor. Now these terrors beset him more than ever. He thought he saw enemies and envious eyes everywhere, and believed himself the subject of intrigues and betrayals; he was obsessed by fear of the Inquisition. He had faith in no one, thought himself watched, and believed that his chamber, during his absence, was opened



Tasso at Ferrara
From a painting by Heilbuth

with false keys and manuscripts taken from his chests. He would trust no servants, and once when he came home and caught his servant in his room rage so overcame him that he took his dagger to the man. The duke sentenced him to several days' imprisonment for this.

Tasso did penance for his deed in a tiny room on the Cortecchia and had no unkind treatment to complain of. People were as good as possible to him, and his nerves seemed to calm themselves. He was allowed to go free again and received permission to go to Belriguardo. The court was there, enjoying the pastimes of summer. It might have proved a wholesome distraction for the poet—but the reverse was the case. More nervous than before, disturbed and wrought to the highest pitch of irritation, he went back to Ferrara. Fear of the Inquisition seized him with greater force than ever, and in his agony of mind he denounced himself as a heretic. The duke received the letter which he wrote against himself and sent it on to Rome, but he added with honesty that he believed the writer to be innocent. In Rome they took the same view of Tasso's accusation.

With the Franciscans, who had at first refused to take in a madman, Tasso found refuge after long entreaties and on the duke's personal request. Guarded by two monks, who tried to talk him out of his obsession, and to get him to take the vows, he found the days unbearable. His mind became more and more darkened. The monks did not know what to do with him, and brought him back to the castle. Here the thought of flight seized him. In an unguarded moment, he stole out to freedom. Fearing that he

would be followed, he hid at first in the neighboring country, then hastened to Poggio, where he nearly died of exhaustion. From Poggio he made his way to Bologna and so over the Apennines to Sorrento.

There is no need to follow Tasso's tragedy further. It was a chain of suffering and sorrow, best described by himself in a sonnet written during a lucid interval:

A hell of poignant pain to me is life.

My sighs are Furies, tearing, raging, rending;

My wishes, serpent's brood of hate and strife,

Poison through this poor heart of mine are sending.

Yet there is a question that cannot fail to suggest itself. Had the fate of this unhappy poet, who bore within him for so long the seeds of insanity, a significance of wider import? The answer must be looked for in the conditions prevalent in Tasso's own day.

When he was born, the sun of the Renaissance was already on the wane, and although he himself was a child of this dominant epoch, an epoch of intellectual power and inspiration, yet, when he first set foot in the great world, he found himself in a strange and unaccustomed milieu. A dull reflection of the vigor and freshness of the past still remained, copying outwardly the stamp of the Renaissance, but inwardly men had changed. The liberal spirit, the self-development of the Renaissance was oppressed and enslaved by intolerance and fanaticism. Men's minds were imbued instead with an almost medieval outlook on life. So long as Tasso joined in the brilliant social world to which his love of company drove him, he was able to

master the warring elements in his soul. But when he turned his mind into itself, brooding soon brought upon his delicately balanced nature the whole weight of his mistrustful contradictions. Then the black pit yawned before him, and he sank into it as did the Swabian Holderlin some two hundred and fifty years after.

So closed the symphony of the Renaissance, so warm in tone—period of the salon's keenest cult. Not even the social life of the rococo period, though rivaling it in perfection of form, approached it in power and grandeur. It closed on this note of tragedy, deep and somber—to leave the more lasting impression on posterity.

PART II

Baroque



EVERY period has its own ideal. It is formed in accordance with the conditions and characteristics of the tone of society, and women are the arbiters of this tone. Even on that evening at the Castle of Urbino to which we owe the portrait of the perfect cavalier of the Renaissance, the influence of the women was to be seen. Yet they were still onlookers or, more correctly, umpires, merely deciding the contested points.

A hundred years later they have become despotic. It is they who dictate the code of manners for the *cortegiano*. He is still, as in the Middle Ages, a gentleman-in-waiting to his lady, but it is not the higher laws of love that he obeys; it is the rules of etiquette. He is like a marionette, jerking when the strings are pulled. He must keep his lady company even if she sit for hours at her looking-glass; he must amuse her with all the news of the day, recite to her, play the mandolin—in short he must do everything he can to dissipate her ennui. Instead of spontaneous courtesy, there are tedious and rigid rules to be observed in his behavior to his lady.

In France, where women were a cult, they fought this unnatural state of things, the women themselves revolting against it. They did not let the reins go out of their hands, but they changed the fetters into garlands. The men remained, as before, in their power, but as it was not so obtrusive a tyranny, women gained in influence. Even sly Cardinal Mazarin used them diplomatically. Trusting to the tact and discretion of a French lady, he sent the Duchess of Longueville to the Westphalian town of Münster to

secure the long-desired peace. And he was not deceived. The social talents of the Bourbon princess achieved more than the most experienced diplomatic training.

The *cortegiano* of the French baroque period in his true self was little different from the man of the Renaissance. He only looked different. Great attention to appearance was expected of him. Manners were more important than brains. That he must have smelled powder and be something of a hero, was not stressed, simply because it was taken for granted. But charm, wit, an interesting air, and fine clothes were new attributes, not before demanded of him. On them the ladies of the period, especially the Parisians, set the greatest store. To be a man of gallant adventure went half-way to winning their hearts. Anyone with a reputation for wit and agreeable ways found the doors of all the salons open to him. He deserved the name of *honnête homme*.

Such a man was the Chevalier de Gramont, whose life of love Anthony Hamilton has wittily told. His friend, the Comte de Bussy-Rabutin, gives us the following portrait of him:

"He had laughing eyes, a well-formed nose, a handsome mouth, and a chin that gave a pleasing expression to his face. There was something fine, difficult to describe, about his features, and his figure would have been very good if he had not stooped a little. He had a quick, agreeable wit; the way he said things made them seem important when, said by another, they would have seemed trivial. He was generous to extravagance, so that neither his lady nor his rival could keep a faithful servant. In fine, he was

the best man in the world. He was the most uncomfortable of lovers if one did not return his affection. As he never spoke seriously, a lady had to be very vain to believe that he really loved her."

This little sketch paints him admirably, the typical *cortegiano* of the baroque, who created so many embarrassments among the ladies of the English court that the witty Saint-Évremond, in spite of the moral lectures that he read him from time to time, called him his "hero" and wrote an epitaph with this line in it:

"A Gramont is indispensable."

He told the aging Ninon de Lenclos that he was the only man who was not absurd at court.

If one wishes to name the womanly counterpart of the Chevalier de Gramont, the choice is not easy. One has to find a woman who is a type of all the qualities characteristic of the time. Saint-Évremond gave his ideal of woman as follows:

"A figure of the right height, with regular features, and in her carriage that easy lightness that is as far from constraint as from the sort of freedom which makes a woman swing her hips to the detriment of all distinction. Her mind should be enlightened without being too inclined to wander into abstruse subjects; she must have penetration and vivacity; her whole personality must be noble and great, and her nature incline to the generous. In business matters she must possess discrimination; she must be pious without bigotry or somberness; her greatest charm the art of being always herself."

Saint-Évremond shows us one thing in this description—that the woman his imagination here paints did not exist in reality, for he implies that in all the beautiful women he has seen, though they possessed qualities that adorned them, yet he has always discovered others which they had every reason to keep hidden. The presumptuous philosopher seemed to lay little weight on his own ideal, since he himself gave his heart to a woman who can only be said to have possessed the desired qualities with a grain of salt, and had a vast number of the other kind.

This lady was Mazarin's niece, Hortense Mancini, the most perfect *gentildonna* of her day. Everyone who went to England at the end of the century came back to rave over her beauty. The Prince of Monaco, who had come to London on business for two days only, having made her acquaintance, stayed two years. A romantic duel was fought between the Chevalier de Soissons and the young Swede, Banér, which resulted in the death of the latter—a circumstance that so deeply grieved her that she lived in retirement for some time after. She thought of going into a convent, but the rascal Saint-Évremond kept her from this, telling her:

“When ugly women retire to a convent it is the will of God, but it is your duty, lovely creature, to teach us to praise Him, when we see you.”

She followed her clever old friend's advice and threw herself eagerly into social pleasures. When she reappeared, the exquisites of London were beside themselves with joy. She received their homage with coquetry, allowed the older ones to praise her wonderful dark eyes and go into rap-

tures over her blue-black hair—even to throw lovelorn glances after her. In the little palace of St. James, a charming summer dwelling, half hidden in the park, she held her court, runaway wife of the Duc de la Milleraye though she was. Here her friends gathered, and the lively bustle of a salon in the grand manner was to be found. The guests were not disturbed by the fact that the room was like a menagerie, with dogs fighting under the table, cats mewling, and monkeys racing up and down the curtains, while parrots shrieked in the visitors' ears. They took little things like this as pleasant whims of the hostess.

There was eager card-playing, and Saint-Évremond lost nobly or let the duchess cheat him. Sometimes there was music, or little singing games were indulged in. They talked of serious things only in intimate circles. When Saint-Évremond enjoyed her companionship alone, they would talk earnestly now and then. The old "esprit," as he was called when a boy, sat close to her then, and was allowed to lay his head on her shoulder, breathe the perfume of her hair, and kiss that lovely upper lip of hers.

Those were holiday hours. As a rule the duchess martyred him with her moods, though he bore it with touching patience. His unchanging device was—"Yours till death." Almost all his letters end with those words. But as she grew older, the duchess's moods became more and more unbearable. She took to alcohol to dull her unhappiness, and it killed her in the end. It was a strange stroke of fate that her husband, who had chased his wandering wife for almost a lifetime, should find her again in her coffin. He carried her on his travels like an extra piece of baggage for

almost a year. At last she found a resting-place near her famous uncle the cardinal, in the chapel of the Collège des Quatres Nations.

When the Duchess of Mazarin died the age of the baroque was nearly over. Signs of a new standard of taste, a more refined grace, and a pedantic, *précieuse*-ridden society were becoming visible everywhere. The duchess herself belonged to the gallant world of Louis XIV. She and Ninon de Lenclos were the last in whose salons the baroque ruled, and the adventurous, literature-loving type of cavalier like the Chevalier de Gramont made an attractive figure. One must not look for the more subtle marks of the baroque in these salons. They had little or no literary significance. This was the specialty of the great Parisian centers, the salons of the Marquise de Rambouillet, of Madeleine de Scudéry, and of Madame de Sablé.

The Hôtel de Rambouillet

THE house in which Cathérine de Rambouillet gave her famous literary receptions in the thirties and forties of the seventeenth century stood in the rue St. Thomas du Louvre, not far from the Tuileries. The good taste that led the society gathered here was shown in the aspect of the house. They say the marquise herself suggested the plans; so at least her intimate friend, Tallemant de Réaux, declares. One evening, after she had been thinking how she could improve the construction of the place, which was unsuited for much company, she suddenly cried:

"Give me paper and pen. I have what I want!"

Then under her fingers grew the plan for the rebuilding. The marquise wished above all to have a suite of rooms suitable for entertaining, so she put the staircase to the side, and each room was made to communicate with the next by means of high, wide doors. To give the rooms a comfortable appearance with plenty of light, the windows were greatly enlarged. One of the rooms had a window reaching from the ceiling to the ground; this could be opened to its full width and gave a splendid view of the garden which reached to the Tuileries. On summer evenings the fragrance of flowers came in at this window and gently touched the cheeks of the ladies as they listened smilingly to the adventures of the Chevalier de Gramont or the witty retorts of Voiture.

Everything in the room was invitingly attractive: the walls, furniture, that great window, and the doors. Blue

was the prevailing color. Until then red and yellow were the only colors used in such rooms. Blue was a departure. All the furniture was covered with blue velvet and ornamented with gold and silver. The room was therefore called the Blue Salon and under that name acquired an honored place in French literature.

Arvède Barine was not wrong when he said that Madame de Rambouillet founded the salon. There were salons before the marquise opened her house to literary conversation, but the salon had never before been raised to a definite social organization. The Blue Salon was to prove of importance in the history of letters. No one can doubt that the marquise played the most influential part in the significant development of social intercourse which took place under her ægis.

She must have had a fine, understanding nature. Being half Italian and half French, she embodied the traits of both nations; on the one side, temperament, knowledge, and an instinct for the art of living, and on the other side, charm and courtesy. One of her greatest gifts was *politesse du cœur*. She used the gift unobtrusively for the benefit of everyone who came to see her. This was probably her greatest charm.

There were gatherings in many houses in Paris—Richelieu at the Palais Cardinal, Madame de Scudéry, and Madame de Sablé all had salons—but nowhere was the conversation of the same brilliant and far-reaching order as here. Madame de Rambouillet understood how to reconcile most happily the two aristocracies of the time, birth and brain, which until then had been so far apart. Class

distinctions disappeared; every *honnête homme* was admitted to her salon, no matter where he was cradled. From this mixture of birth and understanding, as of an equal nobility, quite a new art was born, the art of conversation, which has remained the characteristic of the French salon. The magic of this conversation did not lie in the subject nor the quick repartee, for the Renaissance had developed these qualities, but in the play of wit. Discrimination was counted of more worth than book-learning.

"There is no spot on earth where more sound common sense and less pedantry are to be met with," the poet Jean Chapelain once wrote to Jean Louis Guez de Balzac, of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Wit joined with urbanity, or—a phrase ascribed to Balzac—the harmony of good manners was to be found in the Blue Salon. But its members were not as yet content with that alone. Even as, a century later, Gottsched and the Deutsche Gesellschaft in Leipzig strove to perfect the German language, so at the Hôtel de Rambouillet they concerned themselves, half in jest and half in earnest, with an attempt to settle the right use of language, the *bon usage*. Though the desire was praiseworthy it cannot be denied that some confusion was created, which again reminds us of the Deutsche Sprachgesellschaft of the seventeenth century.

Many of the words brought into fashion smacked of affectation so that the ladies who used these expressions received the fitting name of "précieuses." Tallemant de Réaux tells us that the marquise had a marked aversion to certain phrases which offended her "delicate ear." One needs only to glance at the Grand Dictionnaire des Pré-

cieuses, which the lexicographer Somaize published in their honor, to see the amazing phrases they preferred. The word *la main* seemed to them altogether too trivial, so they substituted *belle mouvante*. They objected to an "easy chair" and called one "a convenience for conversation."

Although the salon of the Scudéry was the principal hot-house for these flowers of speech, the Hôtel de Rambouillet also fell into the *précieuse* way, though to a lesser degree. Often a tedious subject of conversation would become amusing, simply from the brilliant repartee, but also many serious things became ridiculous from this affected manner, many a trifle being magnified to a monstrosity. What began as a game of wit soon became an extravagant mania which Molière later satirized justly in his "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*."

The Grand Dictionnaire des *Précieuses* affords us other valuable material. It contains the portraits of the best-known people who frequented the salons.

"I have a fanatical love for portraits," says Madelon in "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," giving utterance to one of the crazes of the time. "Portrait-painting"—word-pictures of people known to the company—was one of the favorite amusements of the Blue Salon. All could show their insight and wit. The fashion was adopted by authors. Many took it up with heavy particularity, as does Madeleine de Scudéry in her long-winded "*Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*," which in its seventh volume furnishes portraits of all the guests at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Many brought it to a great perfection of light and airy characterization, as did La Bruyère.

The origin of this social game lay far in the past. Even at the Castle of Urbino it was practiced, but there it had not the fine, pointed humor, which is especially Gallic. With a little imagination one can easily understand the type of entertainment. Subjects, appealing to the intelligence of the players, and urging them to a certain rivalry of wit, always make for amusement, especially in a circle where such humorists as Chapelain, Voiture, and Scarron were to be found. Madame de Rambouillet must have understood how to excite the interest of her guests. Sometimes vases full of flowers would be brought in, to set them talking about the wonders of nature. Something of the kind was done by Anna Maria Schurmanns, the Dutch lady who took her guests into the garden in the spring to talk about the budding flowers.

Many-sided as were the entertainments at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, its principal interest was literature, which often has had to thank the salon for its conceptions, or, to speak more correctly, for criticism which preceded publication. Molière's *Mascarille* was right when he said:

"It is the custom here for authors to read their pieces to us people of position, to get us to admire them and make their reputation. You can imagine that when *we* give an opinion, the pit dare not say otherwise. As for me, I always keep my word. When I have given my promise to the author I begin shouting, 'Splendid! Bravo!' before they've begun to light up."

Many minor writers have tried to seize this easy way to fame, but the finer minds would have none of it. They

came for the serious judgment of the illustrious group and above all of the clever hostess. For François de Malherbe laid it down that poets should not write what women cannot understand, and the maxim was firmly upheld. That the limits of feminine intelligence were not narrow in this circle we know from the fact that Descartes read his "Discours de la Méthode" to the Blue Salon. On the other hand there were writers who gave no weight to the opinions of the précieuses. Pierre Corneille was among these. When he read his "Polyeucte" to the Blue Salon, his listeners advised him earnestly not to permit the piece be performed. The poet, usually so bashful, did not let this judgment affect his plans. The play was produced, and its success proved that for once the Hôtel de Rambouillet had been entirely mistaken.

Yet even in Corneille's tragedies the influence of the salon can be seen. The witty atmosphere had its effect upon the author. The man-of-the-world tone adopted by the heroes of "Cinna Polyeucte" or "La Mort de Pompée" recalls that of the Blue Salon, just as the romances of La Calprenède and Mademoiselle de Scudéry reflect the circle. They are, without doubt, a testimony to the brilliant atmosphere of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. One finds the classic tone blended with the gallant courtesy of the Middle Ages and its chivalrous worship of woman. It is even more striking in the innumerable verses which the wits of the salons laid at the feet of the ladies, a fashion which Molière satirizes in his "Les Femmes Savantes." The scene is so illustrative of the poetic homage of the salons that it cannot be omitted:

VADIUS

The common failing of our authors is
To show their works, and tyrannize the talk;
In the court-galleries and promenades,
At dinner, in the boudoir, they are still
The tireless readers of their tiresome verses.
To my mind, there is nothing more absurd
Than authors begging incense everywhere,
Who, buttonholing anyone they meet,
Make him the martyr of their lucubrations.
I never yield to this insistent folly,
But hold with the opinion of a Greek,
Who, by express command, bids wise men shun
Unworthy forwardness to read their works.
Here is a little poem for young lovers,
On which I should be glad of your opinion.

TRISSOTIN

Your lines have beauties which all others lack.

VADIUS

Venus and all the Graces reign in yours.

TRISSOTIN

Your choice of words is good, your phrasing easy.

VADIUS

Pathos and *ethos* permeate your writings.

TRISSOTIN

Your eclogues have a style that quite surpasses
In sweetness Virgil and Theocritus.

VADIUS

Your odes have such a noble gallant charm
As leaves old Horace very far behind you.

TRISSOTIN

Is aught so amorous as your little love-songs?

VADIUS

Can anything be found to match your sonnets?

TRISSOTIN

Or anything so dear as your *rondeaux*?

VADIUS

Or aught so witty as your madrigals?

TRISSOTIN

Ballades are your most admirable talent.

VADIUS

You are adorable in *crambo-verse*.

TRISSOTIN

If France could only recognize your merit—

VADIUS

If but our age did justice to true genius—

TRISSOTIN

You'd have a gilded coach to ride abroad in.

VADIUS

Statues would be erected to your honor.

One can see from this scene, which contains a biting knowledge of the world, how dearly the poets of that time longed for fame. The poetic form had a triumph never before achieved in France. The meaning of the poem was thrust into the shade. Creative art was overlooked, but the language gained in subtlety and richness. Every poet was led to take up his own particular type of poem in hope of being acclaimed as a master of that form. François de Malherbe, who was already old when the Blue Salon was

at the height of its glory, still lived on the renown of his odes and sang of the marquise as Arthénice:

“We turn to her enlightened mind as to the Pole star.”

Antoine de la Sablière bore with pride the title of “France’s greatest writer of madrigals”; but he soon had to share the fame with Charles de Montausier, who sang of Julie, the oldest daughter of the marquise, in a cycle of madrigals. These, inscribed on twenty-nine pages ornamented with flowers, enchanted the young beauty. Claude de Malleville mastered the sonnet, and Abbé Gotin brought the rondeau into fashion.

The prose writers were not far behind. Jean Louis Guez de Balzac took an honored position as founder of France’s more elegant prose style. His letters were for a time “the most elegant present a lover can give his mistress.” But the academic spirit that rules in them, and is also shown in the “*Œuvres diverses*” which Balzac collected into a book for Madame de Rambouillet, left a trace of heaviness on his style that was not to the taste of the précieuses. There was too much ceremony and formality.

The amusingly chatty letters of Vincent Voiture had greater success. Voiture flattered himself into the hearts of the ladies. At one time he was the favorite of the Blue Salon. From no one were compliments more welcome than from this one-time soldier and conspirator, whose adventurous life was in itself a great attraction.

Another amusing talker was to be found in Tallemant de Réaux. Few of his time understood the taste of the baroque as he has. In his “*Historiettes*” all the company of

the Hôtel de Rambouillet are seen coming and going. "L'Histoire amoureuse des Gaules" of the Comte de Bussy really recounts only gossip of the private life of the court, and was passed secretly from hand to hand for the sake of its piquant naughtiness and the rank of its author. They were catholic in their reading. The same people who relished the indecencies of the Comte de Bussy read with equal interest the penetrating "Maximes" of François de la Rochefoucauld, the inseparable friend of the Marquise de Sablé, and zealous supporter of her "School of Elegance and Sensibility." This philosopher of the enigmatic played in the Paris salons the same rôle as Count Castiglione at Urbino. He was the theorist of the social tone.

"To live in comfort with one's friends, one must be free," he writes. "One must seek one's friends or not as one pleases, and without compulsion—to entertain and be entertained, or merely to be bored together. One must do one's utmost to promote the amusement of those among whom one lives."

A suitable legend for the Parisian salon of the seventeenth century.

La Rochefoucauld was always to be found with the Marquise de Sablé. This lady, who alternated between piety and worldliness, had gathered to her house in the Place Royale an intellectual circle, but was still a daily guest of her friend, the Marquise de Rambouillet. She and Madeleine de Scudéry, whose *carte de Tendre* every cavalier of the day studied, to discover the mysteries of love, were the most constant of the ladies visiting the Blue Salon. Anne Geneviève de Bourbon, the second wife of the Duc

de Longueville, came there too; this was the lady who had assisted in bringing about the Peace of Münster; La Rochefoucauld was passionately in love with her for a time. The energetic princess, "who took little interest in innocuous amusements," urged him into the turmoil of the Fronde, where he nearly lost his sight. It was of her he wrote as he lay wounded:

To make her heart my very own
E'en when as yet I knew her not,
I took up arms against the Throne.
With risk of blindness I atone.

The unrest of the Fronde scattered the members of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The state of affairs in which social intercourse could be regarded as the main interest of life came to an end. A new era of life and literature was coming into being, but one may well claim that no other French salon of those or later days attained to such brilliance.

La Belle Ninon

NOTHING is more natural than for a beautiful woman to take pleasure in her beauty. Women please themselves first; men come later. They are always the first to discover their own charms, and such self-love is sweet, even though not deep, for it flatters with the belief that the love of others will follow."

Saint-Évremond, witty, essayist, and amusing talker, begins his discourse "On the Joy Women Take in Their Own Beauty" with these words. In the assured tone of long experience he sets forth his observations on the vanity of women and ends with the following:

"Nature permits mankind to destroy self for the love of God; yet the slightest injury to her beauty is resisted by woman with a self-love that is ineradicable in her. Wherever a lovely woman may retreat—wheresoever she may be—her bodily charms are dear to her. Dear even in sickness, and when that sickness leads to the gates of death her last sigh is less for loss of life than for loss of beauty."

Beauty was indeed the most precious gift of the woman of the seventeenth century. Saint-Évremond, friend of the two most beautiful women of his time, Ninon de Lenclos and Hortense Mancini, had during his association with them every chance to see how highly this gift of nature was esteemed. Ninon looked on approaching age as a torture, since it meant the loss of beauty. When she had to speak of the spectacles that her weak eyesight necessitated, it seemed as if her heart would break.

"If I had only known I should have to live the sort of

life I am living now, I should have hanged myself," she writes to a friend. And Mazarin's niece, Hortense Mancini, wished to die while still the loveliest woman in the world; indeed that was the reason of her early death. It reads almost like a self-betrayal, the letter that Ninon sent to the grieving Saint-Évremond in sympathy for the death of his adored friend:

"I too wish that Madame de Mazarin could have loved life for its own sake and not thought so much of her beauty, which was always magnificent, even though it had lost a little of its glory. If she could only have accepted friendship as its substitute."

Even as the Duchess of Mazarin was courted in London as the most beautiful woman of her day, so Ninon was called the most beautiful woman in France. The picture that we have of her in our minds is only half the truth. She seems to most of us *une grande amoureuse*, who knew how to attract men, and then, when their passion was awakened, would draw back coldly, and heartlessly sacrifice them to the newest comer. Gossiping matrons and jealous moralists have made this woman seem a vampire in human form. That she was nothing of the sort there is more than one witness to prove.

She looked lovely, and that was perhaps her greatest crime. Even as an old woman in cap and spectacles there was something unusually striking and agreeable in her appearance. She was certainly not a heroine of immaculate virtue. Where was such to be found in the society of those days? In her youth she led a life of light affairs, but later she became more decorous, even withdrawing to a convent

for a time, which called forth such a storm of angry protest from her adorers that it was resolved to take her from the convent even if it meant setting fire to the place.

Ninon then fled into the country, to the nuns of Lagny, but her crowd of admirers followed her there and besieged the gloomy building from morning to night. She was striving to learn to be pious, but she could not hold out much longer, for she was too true a child of this world to enjoy a solitary repentance. "You were born to love your whole life long," wrote Saint-Évremond to her once; and he understood her better than anyone.

Constancy in love was not in her nature. She once promised to be true to Monsieur de Rambouillet for three whole months, but she added that it would seem an eternity. Her whole life was a rose-wreath of tender adventures. When she really gave her heart to anyone she was capable of amazing follies, as when she cut off her hair for the Marquis de Vilarceaux, that he might have no doubt of her love. One admirer tells us that many of her friends were never her lovers, and she sailed her bark so cleverly on the sea of love that all who had enjoyed her affections remained her friends. She knew how to differentiate between lover and friend and how to allot to each his proper place.

"Your reputation for justice is founded," says Saint-Évremond in a letter, "on the fact that you have always refused the lovers who might have taxed the purses of your friends. Tell us of your passions; it will enable us to recognize your virtues."

On this, Saint-Évremond wrote a rhymed character of

Ninon, which must find a place here, for it is most enlightening:

They deemed you light in ways of loving.
But friendship with you was a refuge sure.
A goddess of caprice, you're ever roving,
Yet true friends know your friendship will endure.
Your lovers call you faithless and untrue,
And bitter rages seize them as they view
Some other gallant tear you from their arms,
Awakening you once more to Love's alarms.
So to the many you like Helen seem,
Gay, beautiful, but still—of slight esteem.
We others claim, firm as a Roman saw,
That Ninon's word of honor is her law!

It would be wrong to assume that Ninon's whole thoughts were devoted to her love affairs. Her letters show knowledge and learning, and she was in constant communion with the most important people of her time on many serious matters. She gained the respect of the Queen of Sweden, who said that the one thing Louis XIV lacked was the friendship of Ninon. This saying shows the importance which Christina set on Ninon's influence, and also the talent Ninon—whom Scarron called "*la fille la plus étonnante du siècle*"—showed in forming a salon.

Ninon's house was in the rue des Tournelles, now the Boulevard Beaumarchais. On the ground floor was a roomy salon, often used for theatrical performances. Molière brought his company of comedians here and found an intelligent audience. The rooms used for receptions and conversation were on the first floor. As blue was the dominating color of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, yellow was chosen

here for the principal room, which received the name of the Yellow Salon. From this room led a smaller, comfortable boudoir, the *chambre des élus*, in which Ninon received her most intimate friends between five and nine.

A cheerful company assembled here. They teased one another, gaily discussed literature and fashions, had much to say about philosophy, but still more about love. They coquetted with free thought, lately become the mode through the dissension on Grace that raged between the Jansenists and Jesuits. Jokes and sallies ruled the talk, too serious a tone being avoided. Everyone managed to find some good thing to say. But no preciosity was allowed here; the wisdom of the words was less important than their choice, and the art of living more prized than literature. /

Ninon de Lenclos played in Paris much the same rôle that Veronica Franco had played in her time in Venice. Her salon was a school of good manners. The gentlemen could acquire a finished air and learn how to be entertaining. Everything was decorous in the *chambre des élus*. Tallemant de Réaux says:

“Not the most conceited puppy from court would dare to take a liberty there.”

Ninon was choice in her selection of friends. She had to remember that an important minister might call, and often a crowned head would be sitting in her boudoir.

She loved eccentrics. In the letters she wrote in her old age she constantly refers to the originals whom she used to know and whose friendship gave her far more pleasure than that of most of her acquaintances. One of them was

the crippled writer Scarron, who looked on life as an ironical jest. He was the victim of a quack and he suffered also from a malady that afflicts many literary people—lack of money. The old cripple committed the folly of marrying a young girl of seventeen, who deceived him as she pleased. No one dreamed then that this little, flighty beauty would one day take a great place as Madame de Maintenon, mistress of Louis XIV.

The other friend whose affection Ninon retained into old age was Saint-Évremond. When the shrewd and witty writer had to fly from France on account of his indiscreet letter to the Marquis de Créqui on the Peace of the Pyrenees, he chose London as his place of exile, and the Duchess of Mazarin made it easy for him; but Ninon remained his confidential friend. Their exchange of letters gives us an insight into the real nature of this much-belied woman and shows how groundless was the ugly scandal about her. Again and again in these letters shines the remembrance of the good days when Saint-Évremond was a guest at her house.

"I try to cheer the dulness of my days with thoughts of earlier years, warming myself with dreams of forgotten fires."

The aging woman wrote back that he became more and more dear to her, as philosophy permitted. Sometimes she sent Saint-Évremond small remembrances in the form of wine or tea. Then he was reminded of the fine meals he had once had with Ninon.

"If you were only here we would sup together—a supper that should be worthy of old days."

Ninon also longed for such a supper with her old friend, but as if she were ashamed of letting her thoughts run on such material things, she adds:

“Isn’t it gross to think of meals? The spirit must always come before the body—but the body still has its little pleasures, to charm the soul into forgetfulness of sorrow.”

Both friends found that love of good food was a solace for vanished loves of another kind. Ninon envied Saint-Évremond his good digestion, which, in spite of his eighty years, allowed him to eat oysters for breakfast. And Saint-Évremond bursts into triumphant verse:

A good digestion boundless joy does give.
Who has it, his full hundred years may live.

The Northern Pallas Athene in Rome

IT was a wonderful moment when Queen Christina of Sweden came to Ninon's salon—a virago among those elegant Parisian ladies. They must have opened their eyes when the queen appeared before them for the first time in her extraordinary costume—a slovenly satin caftan which she almost always wore, and which reached only to the knee, and the transparent little petticoat that showed her stockings most indiscreetly. Her tumbled hair, cut short, was often not combed all day—an apparition calculated to amaze the fashionably dressed, carefully-groomed Parisians, and tempt them to sarcastic comment.

Christina's sharp eyes must have seen the impression she made, but she did not care; it merely urged her on to greater eccentricity. In her nonchalant way she carried herself like a clownish boy, stuck out her legs, took unseemly positions, talked everyone down in her deep, masculine voice, laughed unpleasantly loud, sighed affectedly, in fact was extreme in everything, and all in the worst taste. Many refused to believe that she was the ex-Queen of Sweden, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus. Mademoiselle de Montpensier took her for a handsome boy who had put on woman's clothes. No wonder that the French ladies—to Christina's great disgust, for she was not partial to her own sex—crowded round her with kisses, so that the queen cried out:

“Are the women crazy to kiss me like this? They can't think I look like a man!”

She was certainly more like a boy than a woman. It

was not only her clothing—she wore shirts cut like a man's and so was not in danger of being left without one, when Innocent XI, as a protest against the décolleté of the Roman ladies, confiscated all shifts sent to the wash—her whole appearance, face, and carriage were unwomanly. Her manly stride perfectly fitted her favorite pursuits, hunting, riding, and war. She said that her greatest wish was to take part in a battle. In her love affairs, however—and she had more than a few—she showed the weakness of a woman. She was sentimental and easy, coquettish and sly. She could be the blind slave of a man she loved, but could never bring herself to marry, because she would not give up her personal freedom, which she reckoned as her dearest possession.

Her inclination for Cardinal Decio Azzolino was her most serious affair. He was a well-read, sympathetic, somewhat cautious man, very careful of his reputation. The letters that she wrote to him when on her travels show this. She was inconsolable if a letter from him was delayed and she went into ecstasies over every scene from a comedy or sonnet that the cardinal wrote and sent to her. Christina had a medal struck in commemoration of her love for him and left it to her heir. It never came into his possession, however, for he died two months after her death, before the legal formalities were completed.

Christina always felt at her ease with clever men. When a ruling queen she had found her greatest pleasure in the conversation of scholars and philosophers, and later she enjoyed serious studies. When she was in Paris she was surrounded by a swarm of writers, who composed poems

in her honor and dedicated their works to her, thinking it a privilege to talk with her. She gathered a circle of clever men round her in Rome, and they formed a sort of society which under the name of Arcadia continued even for some years after Christina's death.

For a time, during her stay in Paris, Christina's eccentricities aroused great interest, but when they ceased to be a novelty, this died out. The government would have been thankful if she had packed her things and left Paris, especially when she started the adventurous idea of driving the Spaniards out of Naples and putting herself on the throne of that southern kingdom. Such wild projects were dear to Christina's heart. Once she planned a warlike alliance of all the Christian nations against the Turks; another time she wanted to snatch Pomerania from her own fatherland. She even had designs on the throne of Poland.

She was always restless and full of wild ideas, taking it for granted that everyone must agree with her. She herself had neither the power nor the money to set such daring plans in motion. Her remittances from Sweden were very irregularly paid, sometimes not at all; and as she had an expensive household, she often found herself in difficulties that forced her to sell her collections and treasures. Once her coronation mantle was pawned—sent to the monte di pietà, as the pawnshops are called in Rome. When she had exhausted every other means, she called alchemy to her aid, and spent many hours in her laboratory with her friend Azzolino, trying to make the required gold.

The Neapolitan campaign so haunted her that one fine day she decided to leave Paris and go to Italy to make the

preliminary arrangements. Her hope of getting Mazarin to assist her had not met with fulfilment. The sly cardinal seemed to fall in with her plans, but he gave her neither men nor money. Yet Christina felt sure of France's help; inwardly, the cardinal was rejoiced to have got rid of so troublesome a guest. His joy, however, was not of long duration; Christina appeared again in Paris after a very enjoyable winter in Pesaro. She came to buy uniforms and all the other necessities for the campaign she proposed—but an event happened which raised the greatest antagonism against the ex-queen and which, indeed, throws a sinister light upon her character.

Christina had discovered that her equerry, Monaldeschi, was guilty of treason; at least, she had discovered that he was forging letters to throw suspicion on her chamberlain, Santinelli; and these letters masked disloyal negotiations which he was carrying on with the Spaniards. Her rage at this discovery knew no bounds. All the entreaties of her friends, of her confessor, and of the guilty man himself availed nothing. Monaldeschi must die, and Santinelli's brother was to play the executioner. This murder, performed in the kingdom of France without authorization, created the worst possible effect. An attempt was made to hush up the real circumstances by ascribing Monaldeschi's death to a quarrel. But Christina would not have it hushed up; she boasted everywhere of her act of justice. Mazarin saw that it would be advisable for the person responsible for such a deed to leave Paris at once. He gave her fifty thousand crowns, and Christina, with a full purse, went back to her beloved Italy.

Until Goethe's time, no Northerner, perhaps, had so longed for Rome as did Sweden's ex-queen. Rome stood to her for grandeur, beauty, and the joy of life. Her love for the city was so great that she declared she would rather live there on bread and water with one servant than elsewhere with the wealth of all the world. Her eyes lit up and she forgot all the difficulties of her travels in Germany when she began to speak of Rome.

Seldom has a foreign sovereign been given such a welcome by Italians as the Northern Pallas Athene received on her first journey to Rome. She took the way over the Brenner, and in Mantua, the first principality she entered, she was welcomed with honor. When she crossed the Po, the river-banks were illuminated. In town after town, there were triumphal arches with inscriptions, the thunder of cannon, the ringing of bells, banquets, tournaments, and fireworks. In Rome these ovations reached their climax. The pope himself—Fabio Chigi wore the tiara under the name of Alexander VII—thought out every possible arrangement to honor his guest, who had taken up her residence in the Palazzo Farnese.

The reason for this homage, which not even a reigning prince had received, was plain. In Innsbruck, Christina, the daughter of the Protestant king, the conqueror of Lützen, had forsworn the faith of her fathers and become a Catholic.

Among Protestants, Christina's action was regarded with suspicion. But if one takes into account Christina's whole character and the trend of her emotions one sees it as a necessity of her nature. Her imaginative, highly

strung, impulsive mind, longing for beauty, could find no pleasure in the austere forms of Protestantism. In the seventeenth century the Lutheran religion, with its wearisomely long sermons, its narrow orthodoxy, its polemical quarrels, was not in a state to conquer hearts.

Initiated by Descartes, Christina received a deep impression from Catholicism. But she never became a strict devotee, in spite of the twenty thousand masses which she ordered in her will to be said for her after death. Mademoiselle de Montpensier declares that her manner when she received Communion was outrageous and had attracted the attention of her confessor. Even in Rome she disturbed a mass in the presence of the pope by her loud chattering and laughter; Alexander gave her a rosary that she might have something to occupy herself with during the church services. Christina was too worldly a woman to subscribe to all the canons of the ritual, some of which seemed to her nonsensical. Baroque in appearance, she was baroque in mind—a strange mixture of fanaticism, and independence, of emotion and cold thought.

Rome was her second home. When she left the city for a while and traveled northwards, to seek for capital or at least adherents for some of her wild plans, she always returned again, driven by homesickness back to the City of the Seven Hills. She now took up her residence in the Palazzo Riario on the Lungara, which speedily became the center of Roman society. It seemed as if the Swedish queen had brought back the long-forgotten social life of the Renaissance. Until then men had set the tone of Roman society, probably because of the influence of the Vatican. In contradistinction to the other Italian towns, woman had

little to do with society here, for with the exception of a few courtezans, women scarcely ventured beyond the four walls of their homes. Christina was the first to succeed as a social leader, and she owed this more to her masculine attributes than to her social gifts. The feminine element was scarce in her salon; she never cared for women and least of all Roman women, whom she found boring. Those of good position were offended at her high-handed, rough ways, and avoided her house.

The discontented voiced their grievances in the salon of Maria Mancini, Mazarin's beautiful niece, who had once won the heart of Louis XIV and had had to do penance for the indiscretion by marrying the Constable Colonna. She had not Christina's intellect, but she had two weapons which she used with skill, when entering into rivalry with the Northern Pallas Athene: beauty and the Parisian air. If the former attracted men, the latter proved alluring to women. They gladly went in their litters to the conversazioni of their Frenchified countrywoman, to learn Paris dances and admire the latest Parisian toilettes, or to watch her elegant ways.

The charming Maria, with whom for a time was staying that other fascinating woman, her sister Hortense, was greatly loved and encircled by admirers. Only one person had jealous eyes for this and that was Gustavus Adolphus's daughter. During carnival, she looked out, annoyed, from between twenty-four bishops' miters, when her beautiful rival passed below her balcony, arrayed in yashmak and escorted by a train of Turkish masqueraders. Maria rode a fiery horse, and coquettishly waved her hand to her rival.

The Palazzo Riario was the scene of a gay gathering.

Madame Landinonce, a washerwoman and now the confidante of the ex-queen, did the honors, with two charming girls as her assistants. Cardinals, Jesuits, naturalists, alchemists, and authors wandered about the enormous rooms, filled with Gobelins, pictures, collections of medallions, and bookcases. On one of the walls hung Correggio's Leda, booty that fell to Gustavus Adolphus at Prague. Talk was lively, and the Northern Pallas Athene as usual led it. Discussion flowed smoothly, of questions such as: Which is the better, to deserve or to possess great good fortune? Is it not as contemptible to deceive as to let oneself be deceived? Are not love and hate the same passion? Is not love nature's real transmuter, hidden in certain widely different beings? The various opinions were stated and recorded; when an exceptionally good reply was given, it was printed. The tone of the discourse was unrestrained. Christina especially distinguished herself by the freedom of her speech. Sometimes one of the guests would come forward and improvise a speech. Cardinal Albani was eagerly listened to when he did this, for he was a master of serious improvisation. Equally welcome was the one-eyed Alessandro Guidi when he read his poems aloud.

Christina describes them as like "the soft tones of the Æolian harp, mingling with the rustling of the pines and cypresses and the murmur of the Aqua Paola in the garden of the Palazzo Riario." And when the Florentine Vincenzo di Filicaja recited his canzoni, the Northern Pallas Athene felt as if she were in the presence of Petrarch's Shade.

Christina, who was widely read and well-grounded in philosophy, found in these her greatest amusement. None

of the ladies of Rome dared to follow along this path. Every meeting of the Arcadia was opened and closed with music. Yet discussions, readings, and music were not the whole program. The doors of the amphitheater of the Bosco Parrasio opened for performances to which the Roman aristocracy came more out of politeness than from interest. Innocent XI had declared bitter war against the theater, forbidding all entertainments of that kind, and Christina was the only one who was not intimidated by the command. Greatly to the Holy Father's annoyance, theatrical performances with music and dancing continued in her circle.

One heard afar the serenades ringing from the garden of the Palazzo Riario on moonlight nights. Prelates and men of the world alike stole in to see performances of not very decent comedies, given in the amphitheater built by the queen in her garden, or to listen to songs from charmingly piquant ladies. When the lovely Angelica seized her lute and sang in her silver voice:

*La zelante Angelica
Col suo cimbalon
Per la sua regina
Vuol cantar la canzon
Flon! Flon!*

the audience was delighted and all joined in the chorus with enthusiasm—"Flon! Flon!"

And "Flon! Flon!" called back echo from the other bank of the Tiber.

The Paradise of Flirts

WHEN Hortense Mancini fled over half Europe from the madly jealous tyranny of her husband the Duc de la Milleraye, she came to London in the December of 1675. The most beautiful of all Mazarin's nieces might well have played the part of instructor in the gentle arts of society to the barbaric English. She had a great chance to teach tact and good manners to the hobbledehoy lords and bashfully awkward ladies. Her appearance was sensational. The whole of London was excited by it, and all who could lay claim to title or rank, from the youngest to the oldest, paid the Duchess of Mazarin a ceremonious call. The king himself was one of the first to hurry to her. Charles II had a passion for beautiful women, similar to that of a trainer for his horses, and grudged no expense when it was a question of securing another beauty for his court. Open-handed as ever, he allotted to the duchess a yearly pension of four thousand pounds, and a suite of rooms in St. James's Palace. Here she soon started a salon in the French manner, and here the king himself would come to play basset with his hostess or to joke about the love affairs of Louis XIV.

Hortense's influence on London society was not so far-reaching as one might expect. She had not the character to withstand the dissolute tone of the court, but yielded to that sultry atmosphere. She let herself be carried away on the stream of excess, sharing in the intrigues and orgies, which seemed a smirch upon her delicacy.

In Anthony Hamilton's memoirs this gay company is

pictured in all its greed for luxury, its thirst for pleasure, its inconstant love affairs—a remarkable contrast to the social life in Paris at this time. King Charles was eager to make up for the dreary poverty of his days of exile. The court was the meeting-place of all who made amusement the chief aim in life. A reputation as a rake was here the greatest honor. Charles would have nothing to do with affairs of state; exile had made him apathetic and he wanted only to relieve his boredom.

Love became a game with rules, and every day the favor of a fresh charmer was sought. One frivolity followed another. Masks were arranged, suppers given on the water, with music and fireworks; walks, rides, excursions followed one another. In summer the beauties and gallants walked in Hyde Park, both to see and to be seen. The chief amusement of the ladies was to provoke quarrels among their admirers, and each sought to show her graces to the best advantage. This one excelled at the dance, that one in her dress, or the elegance of her carriage; some relied upon their wit, others charmed by their power of loving, and very few were esteemed for their faithfulness. Indeed, of all virtues, fidelity was least regarded an adornment for a woman. This view was in keeping with the opinions of the day.

“Every man who believes that his honor depends on that of his wife is a fool who torments himself and drives her to despair,” writes Anthony Hamilton. “But he who, being naturally jealous, has the additional misfortune of loving his wife, and who expects that she should only live for him, is a perfect madman, whom the torments of hell

have actually taken hold of in this world, and whom nobody pities."

Jealousy was looked upon as a vice, or at any rate as a serious lack of breeding. Mothers prayed to God when their sons were born that they might not set foot on Italian soil, for fear they should acquire the ugly quality. They derided Lord Chesterfield when he took his lovely wife into the country to keep her out of the way of her admirers. They would have condoned crime sooner than this folly. The Chevalier de Gramont was indignant at this brutality.

"Poor Lady Chesterfield, for some unguarded looks, is immediately seized upon by an angry husband, who will oblige her to spend Christmas at a country house, a hundred and fifty miles from London; while here, there are a thousand ladies who indulge in that liberty, and whose conduct, in short, deserves a daily bastinado."

The chevalier wrote a saraband that had a great success in court circles:

Tell me, jealous-pated swain,
What avail thy idle arts,
To divide united hearts?
Love like the wind, I trow,
Will, while it listeth, blow;
So, prithee peace, for all thy care is vain.
When you are by,
Nor wishful look, be sure, nor eloquent sigh,
Shall dare those inward fires discover
Which burn in either lover;
Yet Argus' self, if Argus were thy spy,
Should ne'er, with all his mob of eyes,
Surprise.

Some joys forbidden,
Transports hidden,
Which love, through dark and secret ways,
Mysterious love, to kindred souls conveys.

Indeed there were greater sinners than Lady Chesterfield. One of the worst was the Countess of Shrewsbury. She was the promoter of serious mischief, and bore herself more audaciously than any other. Gramont said of her that she would cause a man to be killed every day, and merely hold her head the higher. The duels fought on her account are too numerous to mention. Duels were the mode to such an extent that if anyone refused to fight, as did the poet Rochester, he became the talk of the town. The Countess of Shrewsbury was enchanted when she could set young men fighting for her. She would stand behind the pillars laughing in her sleeve, for she knew that the very youth who was hotly defending her honor would be himself deceived for another that very day.

Where so many beautiful women were gathered as they were at this court, jealousies, quarrels, and duels were inevitable. When the Chevalier de Gramont came to London to console himself with new affairs for his exile—he had had the folly in Paris to make love to a lady whose favor the king himself was seeking—he was astonished at the number of handsome women. Wherever he turned he saw them; it was as if all the women had come to court for a beauty competition. Their portraits are collected in the gallery at Hampton Court; Pieter van der Faes painted them at the command of the Duchess of York, and Hamilton tells us they are good likenesses.

Lady Castlemaine, later Duchess of Cleveland, was the Pompadour of the English court. A sly, designing woman, to judge by her portrait, who could be dangerous to others of her sex if they got in her way. As she enjoyed the king's affection, she occupied a post of power and was flattered by everyone. She had many love affairs, some curiously misplaced. There was much talk at one time of a tight-rope dancer. The ballad singers got hold of it. But the Castlemaine was quite indifferent to their sallies.

At one time she was closely allied with the charming Miss Stewart. This slender lady with the sweet eyes and the little Roman nose outdistanced all the ladies of the court in elegance. She was like a child, laughing at everything and taking pleasure in trifles; she built card houses, while the English lords played for huge sums in her rooms. Her greatest pleasure was a game of blind man's buff, but there was no better dancer than she. She danced her way into the king's heart.

Lady Castlemaine noticed that the king had an eye for her, but took no notice, simply trying to bind Miss Stewart to herself the more. She invited her to her rooms, kept her the night, slept in the same bed with her, overwhelmed her with proofs of friendship in the hope of securing Miss Stewart's affection. Perhaps she thought in this way to win her so that she would turn a deaf ear to the king's wooing. If so, she was greatly deceived. Miss Stewart, in spite of her childishness, had a straightforward nature. The king's inclination for her was obvious; a little more and she might have been Queen of England.

Lady Castlemaine, who until then had believed herself the most beautiful lady at court and in no danger of rivalry,

had to realize to her mortification that Miss Stewart's charms had thrown her own into the shade. As all her attempts to cause her rival to withdraw proved useless, she tried to win back her lost position by the splendor of her jewels. An accident came to her help; the Duke of Richmond wooed Miss Stewart and she accepted him. The king's grande amoureuse could again breathe freely; she need no longer fear her greatest rival.

Lady Castlemaine must have been aware that the king was often faithless to her. She shared his affections with Nell Gwyn at one time. That delightful woman had made her way from scullery maid and orange girl to an acknowledged favorite of the king. The queen took her husband's wanderings placidly enough. She knew there was no real permanence in any of his affairs. She even showed a touching consideration for pretty little sinners. When Miss Stewart was once caught by the king in a meeting with the Duke of Richmond at night, she went to the queen to beg for her protection, representing the whole affair as a harmless escapade. Although the queen knew the place Miss Stewart held in her husband's heart, she was extraordinarily kind to her, raised her from her kneeling position, tenderly embraced her, and promised her help.

The queen herself liked to have handsome women about her. In her entourage was to be found the clever and lovable Mistress Hyde. Her contemporaries praise her dazzling white skin and her beautiful hands and feet. She had only one defect: when she dropped her eyelids, as she did languishingly, she screwed the lids together until she looked Chinese.

Miss Middleton had a similar habit. She, too, liked to

give languishing glances, but she was more adroit than Miss Hyde. Yet in another way she showed even less so. She wanted to be thought clever and lost no chance of making an impression.

"In these attempts she gave herself so much trouble," says Hamilton, "that she made the company uneasy, and her ambition to pass for a wit only established for her the reputation of being tiresome, which lasted much longer than her beauty."

A gossipy little person who caused confusion everywhere with her chatter was Miss Price. Her lack of discretion brought about a scandal which cost her her position. Lord Duncan, her lover, died and left behind a casket which he had designed for her, but which she foolishly did not accept. When they opened this casket in the presence of the queen, they found so many undisguised confidences that the queen was compelled to tell Miss Price that she must mourn her lover away from court.

The man who held the strings of these love affairs and confusions was the Chevalier de Gramont. From the day of his arrival in London he was the popular hero, touching the hearts of all the ladies. Whether playing bowls on the green, or driving in Hyde Park, or cock-fighting, or racing, or at balls or luncheons, he was always a leader. The opening of a court ball was once postponed, while all the guests, the king included, listened to an amusing adventure as told by Gramont. He had appeared in a dress which he had worn before, quite at variance with his usual custom. This roused general curiosity, and everyone was eager to hear the explanation. They learned that

the courier who was coming from Paris with the suit for the ball had stuck on the Goodwin Sands. So at least the chevalier said.

That he became a favorite so quickly was due to his talent for adapting himself. He soon became at home in English society, complying with their manners and customs. He had invitations for every day, and nearly all the ladies made him their confidant. He flattered his way into the hearts of the women with his charming person and his witty talk and he won the regard of the men with his admirable card play. His privileged position gave him opportunity to create here, there, and everywhere teasing little confusions. He did not want the ladies' affections; he wanted only to make their lovers uncomfortable, and drive them to despair. He would station himself on the stairs to frustrate the efforts of a lady to meet her gallant; he would send out spies to intercept the billets doux; by circulating rumors he would separate two sweethearts; he would lie in wait in the dead of night to catch a zealous lover by the leg as he was trying to climb into a window. In fact, loved as he was by the ladies in one way, they also hated and feared him, because of his practical jokes.

Saint-Évremond, who was often a guest at the little dinners the chevalier gave at his house, lectured his friend upon his ways. He was told for his pains that he was a fool, and was asked reproachfully whether he meant to pose as the Cato of Normandy.

There was only one person at court who was safe from the chevalier's teasing, and that was the sister of the Hamilton who has told these adventures so amusingly. She is

described by her contemporaries as a charming and beautiful girl, some say the most beautiful at court.

"Her forehead was open, white, and smooth; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate. Her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness, not to be equaled by borrowed colors; her eyes were not large, but they were lively and capable of expressing whatever she pleased; her mouth was full of graces and her contour uncommonly perfect; nor was her nose, which was small, delicate and turned up, the least ornament of so lovely a face." Her mind was equally harmonious. She spoke only when necessary, gave her opinion after careful thought, and showed in every way superior feeling.

The Chevalier de Gramont, connoisseur of women, understood the worth of such attributes better than any lord at court. He who had caused so many confusions, and as the disturber of so many love idyls, became himself the victim of a longing for a home of his own. His glance fell on Miss Hamilton, loveliest and most virtuous of English ladies who, as he quickly saw, had no part in the loose life of the court. He wooed her and not in vain. The audacious adventurer anchored safely in the haven of marriage with a partner who exemplified once more his talent for keeping the best of everything for himself.

PART III

Rococo



UNDER the ægis of Louis XIV the baroque period attained to influence and power. It was not the Italian masters, Benini, Borromini or the Caracci, the great craftsmen of that extravagant world, who stamped the baroque on Western Europe, but the flamboyantly decorative note of Versailles. From Versailles the all-powerful Bourbon dictated the policy of every civilized state; at Versailles that measured eloquence which set the style in literature for a decade, had its origin. Here a new phase of the art of living was born, luxurious and given to revelry, accepted by the German princes as law. From Versailles the dictates of fashion were given out to the world, and were followed more stringently elsewhere than in the land of their inception. Versailles made Paris the capital of the world.

While this symbol of the French baroque was to throw its evil influence over the German princes on the other bank of the Rhine with a spell that continued until the day of the unhappy Ludwig II of Bavaria, its reign in France itself lasted a comparatively short time. It rose and fell with the power and greatness of Louis, fading from the moment when the change took place in his soul which caused the ascetic to succeed to the voluptuary. When the lovely La Vallière and the haughty Montespan possessed the heart of the king, the charm of the French court, the magic felt by all who visited it, was the sense-stirring splendor it presented. After Ninon's one-time friend, Françoise d'Aubigné, as Marquise de Maintenon watched over the old king's steps with pious inflexibility, the extravagant

spirit of Versailles was obliged to dim the blaze of its halls to the will of the bigot, hush its laughter, and stiffen its hospitality to an irksome formality.

No one saw this change in the atmosphere of the court of Versailles more clearly than the Palatinate princess, Liselotte. She came to Paris at a time when Louis, in his prime, had begun successfully to establish his autocratic power on all sides, and to glorify his court. It was the time that van der Meulen has depicted in a number of copper-plate engravings; hunting scenes, walks, festive welcomes, and great receptions were the order of the day. And the central figure was the king, surrounded by a circle of Junoesque women, with heavy silken robes and ermine mantles, under which voluptuous shoulders and white arms could be seen; women like the Grande Mademoiselle and the Montespan.

But even where the king was not present, life ran in a similarly enchanting flow of social excitements. The whole day was a chain of cheerful entertainment, and they even went to mass to be able to say, "So and so was at mass," when gossiping afterwards. Directly after the midday meal ladies came to call, eager to hear or to share the latest news. Later came the men of quality, to play cards or otherwise enjoy themselves. And so one pleasure followed another, and when they got up at eleven in the morning they knew it would be so.

Liselotte, who possessed a pleasure-loving temperament, plunged into this exciting turmoil, which was all new to her. The king welcomed her with great courtesy and soon won her sympathy. Not till the growing power

of the Maintenon made itself felt did this friendly union become overshadowed when the change at Versailles was beginning. In 1686 Liselotte wrote to the Duchess Sophia of Hanover:

“It is certain that the king can no longer endure gaiety, and he has become so grave that one feels anxious about it.”

Two years before, Louis had secretly married the Maintenon, and from that time the social pace began to slacken. Edict followed edict, fettering mirth and independence, until even comedies were forbidden at the wish of the influential lady.

At that time there lived in Paris a young Flemish boy, named Antoine Watteau. He was of middle height, ugly and delicate, very shy, and ungainly in his carriage. He lived a life of hard, lonely work. He had come from Valenciennes, where his father was a master tiler. He himself was to have taken up that work, but his artist's soul rebelled at the idea. So, being without means, he had been advised to come to Paris, and had entered himself as apprentice to a second-rate painter, and was managing to make a bare living by copying little portraits and devotional pictures. No one would have supposed that this shy youth would be the creator of a new school, and the greatest master of the rococo.

Retired as was his life, he possessed a sharp eye for everything that went on around him. He only needed a glance, and from such brief impression his fancy could create imposing pictures, instinct with a truth that he himself scarcely recognized. When, still seeking a teacher, he

at last found a berth as assistant to Audran, the conservator of the Luxembourg, and went to live in the palace, there opened before him the world whose painter he became—the world of elegant society. But he could only watch it from a distance. When in the palace he was copying a Rubens, there would be moments when he would walk to the high window to rest from his work, and with dreamy eyes look down into the garden where all the Parisians of distinction walked, laughed, and made love.

He saw how the dying sun made the tops of the trees look as if crowned with gold, how the marble goddess seemed to step out of the light shadows, how mischievous sprites peeped from the leafy boskets, and fountains with their silver rain moistened the grass. He saw marble benches on which love-lorn gentlemen told their ladies the tale of Cupid and Psyche, and other seats on which beautiful countesses reclined, coquettishly smiling at the song of the lute-player by their side. He saw couples loiter arm in arm, through the long green alleys, watched by stone satyrs and nymphs. He saw languishing gallantry, vivacity, playful courtesy. He saw Cythera, the smiling island, where careless love and merriment are in the air.

To him, the poor tiler's son, it must have been like a tale his mother had once told him, when life was still rosy. All the longing for this unattainable romance, which burned in him, he put upon canvas in the bright colors of his fancy, and so created pictures which are half dream, half truth. Watteau was not only the chronicler of his time, but also the prophet of the coming time, the laughing rococo.

The people about him were not yet conscious of this coming age. On them weighed the strict rule of the dying sun-king. Not till the lion died did they breathe freely, look round, their liberty restored, and realize that they were indeed quite different from what they had recently appeared, that all the stiff formality was only assumed—a mask that they had been compelled to wear.

But Watteau had freed them from it before this. He saw the butterfly while it was still hidden in its cocoon. He knew—that Flemish youth who looked on at this world as at a fairy-tale. Under his pencil the Junoesque women with their voluptuous shoulders and their white arms, their heavy silken garments and ermine mantles, had already vanished. How exquisite they look, these ladies of the new century, in their soft suppleness, their blooming charm, with their powdered hair and delicately painted cheeks, their enchanting buckled shoes and light-colored garments. Woman has thrown aside her dignity and her imposing appearance and has donned daintiness and piquancy, even as the gentlemen have rid themselves of their full-bottomed wigs and now strut in simply dressed hair, skirted coats, silk stockings, and elegant pumps.

Passion was also set aside. Love must be light and gay, for passion does not harmonize with the mode of gallantry. Other devices must suit with this gallantry: coquettish garments, manners, airs, and gestures. The bow, the careless smile, the play with the fan, paints and patches—all must be studied; new words and ways of speech, whispered confessions, lisping words of love, must be put in circulation, forming the basis of the great change.

Woman stands in the center of this change, this enchantment as one may call it, itself a product of art par excellence; its sole purpose the spreading of beauty.

The salon now, in the true sense of the word, became woman's kingdom, for nowhere else could she have so fine a background for her ability and her social sense. This explains the eagerness of every young lady of the rococo period to have a salon; she married simply to play a part in the world, and have a salon of her own. And she treasured and nursed this little kingdom of hers like a doll. She not only took care that no intruders should spoil its reputation, but she sought for famous guests to raise its standard, weeping tears of envy when other ladies displayed guests of higher standing. She bestowed on her salon more care and affection than she gave to her family, to which, indeed, she was usually indifferent.

Envy and competition drove these salons. Finance sighed for the aristocracy, and the aristocracy for the favor of the court or those of power in the state. One salon strove to outdo the other by the originality of its program, one through wonderful suppers, another through amazing balls, a third by celebrities. Almost every salon had its specialty for which it was sought. They went to President Hénault for his food; Lagrange cooked for him and surprised his guests with the most wonderful delicacies. For anecdote and conversation, they went to Madame d'Husson. Balls were the splendor of the Hôtel Condé and the salons of the comtesses de Sassenage and de Brionne. The little Duchesse du Maine offered clever entertainment. The most famous people of the century were to be met at the

hôtels of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, the Marquise de Lambert, Madame de Tencin and Madame Geoffrin. If anyone wished to see censored theatrical performances they went to the hospitable house of the Duchesse de Villeroi, where voluptuous feasts were served. The best musical evenings were to be found at the salon of Mademoiselle de Pléneuf; politics were discussed in the most instructive way at that of the Duchesse de Gramont; and anyone loving cards would find at the hôtel of the Comtesse de Valebelle just the entertainment he desired.

These salons spread over the period of the rococo, embracing the whole life of society. There was scarcely any kind of entertainment that was not taken up and made the fashion for a time. After the so-called "journées de campagne," when the guests cultivated a taste for outdoor pleasures, salons were turned into cafés, and ladies became waitresses and barmaids. Amateur theatricals were set aside for tableaux vivants, proverbs were acted, and charades given. Games of blindman's buff and throwing the handkerchief amused them for a time. Whatever they had made the rage of the moment, they pursued with enthusiasm. If a picture were the object of general observation, they pushed into the studio or printshop and admired it, not once, but twice, ten times, and then again and again. If it was a fine preacher who had the gift of moving oratory, they forgot their free-thought doctrines and flocked to mass. If an opera became popular, the boxes were filled every evening. If a passion for pets seized them, everyone had to have a dog, a monkey, or a parrot. If hand embroidery became the mode the ladies all plunged with zeal

into the work—until some new occupation took its place.

But it was not only social distractions that the salons produced and fostered; the whole life of the ruling classes, literary and political, was played upon their stages. The salon was the sovereign power of the rococo period and woman its autocratic queen.

Days at Versailles

AT Versailles, and to be more precise, in the Appartement, which extends from one of the withdrawing-rooms at the end of the great gallery to the choir of the chapel, "days" used to be given on every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, between seven and ten o'clock during the winter months. Everyone in fashionable society who had the entrée at court attended them. The conditions of admission were less exclusive than might have been expected from the inaccessible state that hedged Louis XIV. Sometimes people were found there who scarcely belonged to court circles, and Liselotte had some ground for her complaint about the choice of company, though it was merely set down to her German arrogance.

The ladies and gentlemen assembled in different rooms, not mixing until the music began. Without a musical overture no entertainment took place in those days; music ushered in the evening's social intercourse. The art of brilliant talk that had been learned at the salons of the Marquise de Rambouillet and Madame de Sablé had now been lost, and since the main topic of conversation might prove to be a sermon of Bossuet, the only means of ingratiating oneself with the ladies was music. This is why Molière says that women can only be won "through their ears," and why all the gentlemen, when they set out to woo, took pains to provide music.

The compositions favored at Versailles, which everyone took pains to copy, were not the best. Popular taste and art seldom go together, even today, and people as a rule prefer

light music. The insipid pieces by Lulli then won tumultuous applause.

After the music, play began. There was practically no lively talk. This is what Liselotte missed—the unconstrained chatter of a previous circle, varied with real wit. The men had lost the knack of saying nothing in particular with charm. They all seemed stupid and ill-bred to Liselotte. She thought the craze for piety was the cause of this retrogression, for now ladies and gentlemen could not talk frankly to one another, which was the right way to give polish to the gentlemen. She praised the salon of Ninon de Lenclos. She had never visited it, but she had heard so many accounts that she wished her son to frequent it as often as possible. “He would acquire nobler, better sentiments there than his good friends inspired in him.”

In the neighboring rooms card-tables were set out, as many as twenty to a room. Most of them were covered with green cloths with gold fringes. At some of the tables a couple of men would sit, excitedly playing piquet or *berlan* for high sums; at another, *tricktrack* was the game. At a round table would be a group of noble dames amusing themselves with *omber*; among these would usually be found Liselotte and her only confidante at Versailles, the Comtesse de Châteautiers. Monsieur and the dauphin were as usual having a hand at *lansquent*, the fashionable game of the baroque period, played by Liselotte’s husband with such passion that he lost fortunes at it.

In an adjoining room the billiard balls rolled on the green cloth. For a time the Duc de Chartres, Liselotte’s son, might be seen in a corner playing chess, but he was

abstracted and distrait, for his betrothal to Mademoiselle de Blois was coming nearer and nearer. He stole glances now and then at his mother, who was firm in her opposition to the unequal marriage; then his eyes would turn to his future bride, who sat stiffly on her fauteuil, overdressed and shy, watching the door in anxious expectation of the moment when her royal father would appear.

But he did not come. In past times, when the queen was still alive, he would often put in an appearance and even take a hand at cards, but lately he always stayed away. It was commonly reported that he passed the evenings with Madame de Maintenon, at work with his various ministers. Really he was busy with penances and devotional exercises, listening to the pious fathers who formed the court of the all-powerful mistress, and at her request sang the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Or he would be alone in her boudoir, talking over her match-making projects and giving his consent to them.

It happened fairly frequently that the king startled the guests at a day with the news of some forthcoming marriage, which had been planned in the apartments of the "old woman." The parties concerned would be called from the card-tables and shown into the king's cabinet. Courteously, but in such a way that to refuse would be lese majesty, the king would then tell them his decision, which was quickly known to the whole company. So had it been with the Duc de Chartres. When his betrothal to the Montespan's daughter had been decided upon and his royal father-in-law told him of the plan, he received the news in silence, in spite of the promise he had given his mother.

His father was equally afraid to speak. Liselotte, as the Duc de Saint-Simon tells us, showed her annoyance very plainly. She strode up and down the gallery, like Ceres seeking her daughter Proserpina after the girl's abduction, received her royal brother-in-law's courteous speeches in grim silence; when he was making her a deep bow she turned her back on him, and when he recovered from the salute that was all he could see. Her son received as punishment for his disobedience a sounding box on the ear, administered in the presence of the whole company, when he was dutifully kneeling to kiss her hand.

Such surprises brought, at any rate, a slight change into the dreamy atmosphere. They gave the guests something to talk about for half an hour, and that was lacking before. They stood about in groups discussing the news in hushed tones, so as not to wound the feelings of those concerned. Or they might go to the rooms behind the billiard room for refreshments and there gossip about it. Four long tables were provided with tarts, fruit, and sweetmeats, looking like a child's Christmas party. In another room wine was served and liqueurs. When they had eaten and drunk they returned to the salons and sat down to play with more energy. Anyone who did not play walked from room to room, sometimes to hear the music, sometimes to watch the games. Such a man was regarded by the ladies as a mere piece of furniture. No one stayed away from the tables long, especially not the gentlemen of the court, for the king generously paid their losses, and even lent them money, that they might indulge their passion for the cards.

"Play is terribly high here," writes Liselotte to the

Princess Palatine Luise, her father's second wife. "People are mad when they sit at play; one will howl, another thump the table with his fist till the whole room shakes, and another curse God so that one's hair stands on end to hear it. They all seem so full of despair that it makes one quite anxious about them."

Such manners naturally had a bad effect on the ladies; a lascivious tone began to be adopted, which to people of Liselotte's refinement seemed deplorable. She speaks of them as "contemptible creatures, with their dress, their drinking and their snuff, which makes them absolutely stink." Though the days, as contrasted with the Sodom that flourished at the court in the Montespan's time, may seem to the dispassionate observer of little consequence, yet that makes the contrast the more striking. Bigoted hypocrisy characterized one and unbridled passion the other. One can understand the annoyance of the German prince's daughter. Variations on Hogarth's pictures in a salon—that is about what these *Jours d'Appartement* seem to us.

The day lasted until ten, when it was the king's habit to sup. Formerly there would have been a concourse of people, but it had now narrowed down to five or six. The silence of the cloister reigned during the meal; nothing was said—at most a word or two whispered into a neighbor's ear. Where now were the days when they had laughed without blushing over the way the Prince of Orange had stepped into his bridal bed in woolen undergarments—days when they spoke quite openly of the effects of a purge?

Wearily, monotonously the days dragged on at Versailles. The older and more infirm the king became, the more life stagnated about him. They were not men—they were wooden marionettes wandering through the lighted rooms of the palace. On the floor over which the heavy ermine cloak of the Duchesse de Montpensier and the flowered, lace-trimmed silk petticoats of the Montespan used to be drawn so imperiously, a company of stiff puppets whose every movement was ruled by etiquette now tiptoed. In the king's rooms, where writers used once to hasten happily to catch the crumbs that fell from their patron's favor, monks now paced, as if the rooms belonged to them. Everything was banned, both theater and dance; and when it was absolutely necessary to have some sort of festivity, the guests sank with weariness, heavy as lead. Instead of the theater, it was to mass they went where they mumbled piously or dropped off to sleep.

Bossuet was the popular author of the time instead of Molière, and the disputes of the Jesuits and Molinists were now more interesting than literature. The unseen hand of Madame de Maintenon was felt everywhere, for from her boudoir she ruled Versailles.

It was unbearable, this atmosphere. Those who had sufficient strength of character to resist the general bigotry drew back into solitude. Liselotte was one of these. She would not swim in the "old woman's" waters, and found her company at home, among her little dogs, her engravings, and her books.

"I can amuse myself with them and displease neither God nor the world."

And so the light of Versailles flickered out. The once gay home of the *roi soleil* had become a cloister, for he himself was now a monk in all but the hood. If Duchess Sophia had seen that Ash Wednesday Versailles, she would certainly not have cried:

"Versailles qui passe tout ce qu'on peut imaginer de beau et de magnifique!"

The Embarkment for Cythera

WHEN the Lion on the Bourbon throne breathed his last on the first of September, 1715, there were few people in France who did not look upon his death as a release which freed them from an intolerable oppression. The day of his funeral was treated as a day of rejoicing. The people shouted, danced, sang, drank, and gave vent to their delight in every possible form. It went so far that the body of the ruler who had been almost worshiped as a god was greeted on its way to the royal vault in Saint-Denis with jeers and insults.

What was the cause of this spontaneous rejoicing, this temperamental outbreak, this changed opinion? What lay at the back of this bitter hatred? Was it the last unfortunate war, the debt of 2,471 millions? or the priest-ridden despotism that from Versailles had spread over the whole land? Every class had its grievance. The lower classes were oppressed by the general financial ruin of the kingdom which the long-standing wars had brought about; they suffered from the dearth of commodities and groaned at the difficulty of keeping life going. The higher classes, weary of the monkish rule, longed to be free from the tutelage of the Maintenon and her comrades. They did not want to hide their sins under a cloak of hypocrisy; they wanted to live open lives, or at least not to have their feelings circumscribed by rigid etiquette.

It was at this time that Watteau painted his famous picture, "The Embarkment for Cythera," now in the Louvre, which he presented to the Academy when he was

made a member in 1717. Does it not suggest an artistic vision of that freedom which came with the death of the king? From a cold and dreary wood in which even the marble statue of Aphrodite looks stiff and lifeless, one's glance travels to an idyllic island. A gaily-pennoned ship is afloat on scarcely moving waves and invites one to embark for the enchanted shore in the distance. It is Cythera. It is the island of love. But not only love: freedom from care, gaiety, enjoyment—the dream of all suffering from the bonds of ceremonial. The day had come which promised freedom. Now they could leave, travelers and pilgrims in one, the comfortless thicket that had overshadowed their lives and reach the sunset in holiday mood. Rushing in crowds to the waiting ship, those gentlemen in blue cloaks and crimson suits, with flower-twined crooks in their hands, the ladies so fresh and blooming, with tender, naked shoulders and fluttering petticoats, set out for Cythera. They left tradition behind them; all those iron rules were forgotten, and a new life opened before their eyes.

This was what happened after the death of Louis XIV. They set out for the enchanted isle, with intent to found a new social life. In a night, everything had changed; comedies could be played, the sexes meet in pleasant intercourse, love could once more be made openly and frankly. For Liselotte's son, Philip of Orléans, who was regent for Louis's great-grandson, was himself a lover of life and would not be ruled by any Jesuit. He gave the tone to the new existence, which opened with an almost glaring burst of merriment.

His suppers were, for the first quarter of the century, the center of that life of gallantry. All is light and gay and intoxicating, as can be seen from Nattier's picture. It is bacchanal and not mere supper—a rapture of the senses. Each gentleman has his lady. They form a gay circle, and the men set out to charm, taking their partners round the waist, whispering ribaldries into little ears, pressing the loved one to their hearts, or at least exchanging speaking glances. Sometimes the caresses take so stormy a character that a chair falls to the ground and, lying there, completes the picture of abandonment.

Champagne heats the blood of these well-nourished beauties, who seem a little overcome by it as depicted by the brushes of a Pierre Mignard or a Charles Lebrun. In their eyes desire is flaming, but it is mixed with a spark of impudence. They lift their glasses to their lips with somewhat clumsy grace. One can see that they have not yet acquired the art of graceful movement. Even the laughter, that silver trill of the rococo, they have not yet learned. The laughter that greets the regent's best jokes is loud and unrefined.

He himself stands, with his regent's scarf on his breast, one arm round a full-bosomed lady with a Grecian profile, champagne in his hand, and talks—wittily, with the fire of youth—of triumphs of the flesh and the intoxicating delights of this world. He is a figure of the old régime, the full-bottomed wig still upon his head, while rococo Cupids lightly and invisibly hover over him. And in that pose he died on the night of the third of September, 1720, a full glass in his hand, a beauty within his arms.

Such were the notorious suppers of the regent, and that is how the salon of the eighteenth century had its beginning, that was how the new life began. It was the more intoxicating because of the long abstinence. When the wave of giddiness, raised by the first emancipation from Versailles, had subsided, the way was open for more discreet behavior. Ladies who understood how to direct a salon were still wanting. The best-known, most distinguished women of the regency, Madame de Prie, Madame de Parabère, Madame de Sabran, had no salon. The art of conversation was still in abeyance. Talk still concerned itself with every-day matters, and they had no more interesting subject to debate than the affair of Father Girard, who had had a child by one of his penitents—a story the Jansenists were magnifying for their own reasons out of all proportion. They were so much in debt that they could not pay their milkmen, as was the case, we learn, with Madame d'Estrées, who was consequently unable to offer her guests an adequate supper. Above all, Law and his swindling companies were causing anxious and uneasy minds. These things together left little opportunity for more refined amusements.

"I am as tired of all these banking affairs—the Mississippi or the South Seas," wrote Liselotte, who would have welcomed a more distinguished spirit in her old age, "as if I had been spoon-fed."

And when the canny Scotsman who had undertaken to give paper for gold, with no sufficient capital at his back, went bankrupt and fled from Paris, his flight was for days and weeks the one topic of conversation.

This state of things explains why it was that more serious people were beginning to long for a salon. The Hôtel de Rambouillet occurred to many minds as the ideal, but Paris was not yet—or more correctly, was no longer—the right place for the growth of a salon, since Versailles still absorbed all social life. So society followed art into the country, and in a pastoral frame appeared those *bureaux d'esprits*, which gave to the salon of the rococo period its characteristic tone.

III

Great Nights at Sceaux

IN the year 1692 Paris saw two amazing marriages. In February the Duc de Chartres, Liselotte's son, solemnized his marriage with Louis XIV's natural daughter, Mademoiselle de Blois, and a few weeks later mademoiselle's brother, the Duc du Maine, was married to Anne Louise Benedicte de Condé. When she heard of this last marriage Liselotte felt as if a stone had been lifted from her heart, for she had had the secret fear that her own daughter would fall a victim to Madame de Maintenon's love of match-making, and have to take a son of the Montespan as a husband.

With his usual conscientiousness Saint-Simon, that delightful chronicler of Versailles, describes the marriage of the little Condé princess; though little, she was the tallest of the three, a fact which influenced the duke's choice. The ceremony was performed in the presence of the king and the whole court. The King of England, who happened to be in Paris at the time, handed the bridegroom his nightshirt, and the next morning the most distinguished society in Paris visited the bedroom, where the young couple were still lying in bed. A charming scene: the newly married pair, wrapped in a cloud of snowy bed-linen, surrounded by a crowd of people, in ceremonial attire, outvying one another in compliments and flatteries.

So began the married life of the little Parisian who was expected to play a part in the great world. On the very first day of her marriage her house was opened to company, and the spirit that was to reign there displayed

itself. Her bedchamber turned into a salon in the early morning hours. And this remained the same all through her life, like an unwritten law, except that the guests entered a little later and more formally, and that the very early hours were kept for intimate friends.

The levee! The intimate charm of these early morning salons is felt in the pictures of Lancret, Pietro Longhi, or Boucher. Scenes of enchanting daintiness, interiors of alluring poetry. Like the marble Cupid in the corner of the bedchamber, one can see everything—all the charming vanities of a rococo lady, all the finesses of her toilet. How madame pushes back her hangings of her bed, how she shakes sleep from her limbs, how she rings for the maid, how she sets her little feet down on the carpet, how she slips into her mules, how she strokes her lapdog, and how she changes her shift. It is entrancing to see the ingenuousness with which she does it all. The steward often stands in the room with the maid, dropping his eyes and blushing. Madame does not even see him. A man or a statue—it is all the same. Ashamed? But why? "*Un domestique!*"

When madame has slipped on the necessary negligée and when the maid has put on the necessary stays, sloped and fastening up both sides, the hour has come for the reception of the impatient gentlemen waiting in the adjoining chamber; lovers and scholars, officers and authors, statesmen and philosophers. They come at the right time to see madame's toilet completed, to see the maid arrange her coiffure and madame herself sprinkle her fingers with perfume. They are allowed to watch these interesting

things and to drink a cup of chocolate. And while the powder-puff is busy and the rouge is being spread on madame's cheeks, they chatter of the news of the day—the latest heart-affair of the Duc de Richelieu, the newest comedy by Marivaux, the expensive supper given by President Hénault, and the ball at the Hôtel Condé. Madame learns everything that can interest her and all that she herself will want to use later in the salon or when promenading at the Tuileries. She need not open her mouth, the news comes to her like a ball in the air; she needs only to open her ears and smile and cast glances and nod—in short to use the whole gamut of gesture. She dare not exert herself further or it might spoil the effect of her coiffure.

When this is firmly affixed to her head and her face is made up with rouge and powder, her body seems finally to awake. Everything about her begins to twinkle and live; she smiles no more, but laughs outright; she does not whisper but talks; she does not merely lift her eyebrows, she storms. It is as if all her little whims had broken their leashes and burst forth in full cry. And the flood of wishes, commands, and scoldings falls on the bystanders and causes a vast stir. Maids run here and there, bringing theater announcements and bouquets, hawkers press in and offer madame the freshest sheet of scandals, vanishing quickly when they have placed it in her hand, milliners, flower-girls, bird-sellers run in and out; the doctor appears for a short visit, the abbé comes in to bid her good morning. The beaux sitting about criticize her toilet. It might be a booth in a fair.

Then suddenly it all stops, and there is a solemn hush.

Madame has risen. She quickly presses another patch under her eye, throws a last, questioning glance at the mirror, curves her lips into a fascinating smile and steps before her admirers, bewitching in the piquant disorder of her morning toilet. A general "Ah!" of admiration. The levee is over.

Madame must be as beautiful as Madame de Brionne, as coquettish as the Popelinière, as dainty as the Rochefort; she must possess all the perfections of a model of Lavreince, if she wished to make her levee a success. The little Duchesse du Maine must have been just such a little person, for she knew how to give an enchanting note to the society of the eighteenth century. Although born at a time when the sun of Louis XIV was at its zenith, she was from crown to toe a lady of the rococo. The granddaughter of the great Condé seemed to have inherited the tradition of society at its most distinguished point, as it was in the days of her grandfather, and she added to this tradition the touch of romance that gave it fresh life.

The duchess worked like a pioneer to create a good social tone. Her levee was attended by the small circle of her admirers—her salon by a vast circle. There was scarcely a man of standing who did not enjoy her hospitality, whether his claim to distinction was of rank or brains. The Don Juan Richelieu, about whom all the ladies were fighting, was not a more welcome guest than Fontenelle or Voltaire.

Not in Paris but in a château in the Champagne, the salon of the little duchess flourished—in Sceaux. They fled from the capital because all social life was again suffering

from the nearness of Versailles and they wished more freedom. They sighed for a pastoral idyl because it made such a striking background for the splendor of a salon. They were tired of the endless promenades in the Tuileries and the garden of the Luxembourg, suppers at the Porcherons and visit to Chagrin de Turquie, to the jewelers most in mode; they longed for murmuring streams and flowery meads. They wanted to play at being shepherds and shepherdesses, and while wandering after the flock tell one another all the pretty things which they had been gathering since the levee. They wanted to dance minuets and gavottes on the grass for a change; the difficult dancing floor would help them to get back the grace they had lost at Versailles. Their whole life changed into a series of Watteau pictures; now an open-air concert, now a Venetian dance, and now a breakfast in the fresh air, with gallant whispers to the ringing of bells.

Then the nights, the famous *grandes nuits de Sceaux*! The halls of the château shone with the brilliant light that greets us from Saint-Aubin's *bal Paré*. The couples who had made love during the day in open spaces, by clear streams, and in the shade of marble nymphs, or had wandered in a smiling Arcadia, lute on arm, three-cornered hat on head, or had enjoyed a picnic together, now robed themselves in court dress and proudly, as if going before their king, danced in the rooms from whose long windows the light streamed out into the darkness. Not everyone had the right of entrance to this garden. A Cerberus guarded the door. A Cerberus in the person of Monsieur Malézieu, who filled the rôle of a master of pleasure at Sceaux. He

put them through a searching examination before he would admit them to this illustrious circle, where their wit would have to hold its own in a perfect firework of sparkling talk. For what would solemnity do here, where the impudent, bewitchingly light merriment of the rococo reigned?

Surprises were prepared for the guests, clever entertainments, and some which put their intelligence to the test. There was one game called "poetic lottery." Every guest drew a slip of paper on which only one letter was written. But that one letter meant much, perhaps praise and applause, and perhaps laughter and humiliation. If, for instance there were an "S" on the paper, it meant—"Write for the next *grande nuit* a sonnet." If an "O," the lucky drawer had his choice of an ode or an opera. "A" meant that the choice might be between an aria or an apotheosis. Many were ready to break their heads over the writing of an ode or the rhyming of a sonnet, for not everyone can sit in the saddle of Pegasus. But some of them paid a couple of livres to some poor poet, who did the work for them. At the next meeting they read out the poems proudly, as if they were their own. Well for him if he passed successfully through that baptism of fire and escaped without detection.

There was a little stage in the château. Where was there not? In every country house they were to be found, perhaps only propped on tubs, their wings made of a pair of old curtains. But the primitive erection did not prevent the performance of the great dramas of Voltaire, the ladies themselves playing in the cast. The applause went to their heads; they felt so wrapped up in their parts that they

played the comedy all over again in real life. And as they were not acting professionally, but from pure love of it and naturally from womanly vanity, the effect was spontaneous and artistic.

"More than ten of our ladies of high position," said the Prince de Ligne, "show more talent for singing and acting than the best actresses in any theater known to me."

One such excellent actress was Voltaire's inseparable friend, Madame du Châtelet. She appeared at Sceaux and was applauded as if she were Adrienne Lecouvreur. She played the leading part in Rameau's "Pastorale d'Issè" with enchanting grace. The fame of her acting brought so many of the curious to the château in Champagne that the auditorium could not hold them. As this did not please the little duchess she made severe rules, but still they came. Everyone wanted to see the divine Émilie play. Voltaire and his friend brought their own friends from Paris without even asking the duchess's leave. The duchess lost her temper in consequence and the result was—Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet turned their backs on Sceaux.

Life at the château alternated between games and performances. M. Malézieu's inventive brain had to think out programs. Recitation of all sorts, charades, card games—all had a place in the *grandes nuits*. The little duchess did not like to see people looking bored. The five years' imprisonment that she had suffered as punishment for her share in Alberoni's conspiracy must have been an unbearable torture to her, used as she was to a brilliant social life. As soon as she was set free, she showed herself to be more

pleasure-loving than ever. She seemed to want to make up for lost time. Not a day did she let pass without some entertainment. No one drew out his watch and longed to get away.

Fontenelle once asked what difference there was between a watch and the lady of the house, and gave as answer: "The one reminds you of the hour, the other makes you forget it." Nothing could more clearly indicate the type of hospitality at Sceaux than this bon mot. For a long time, even after other salons had arisen in Paris, they still spoke of the "nights" of the Duchesse du Maine.

IV

The Idyl of Cirey

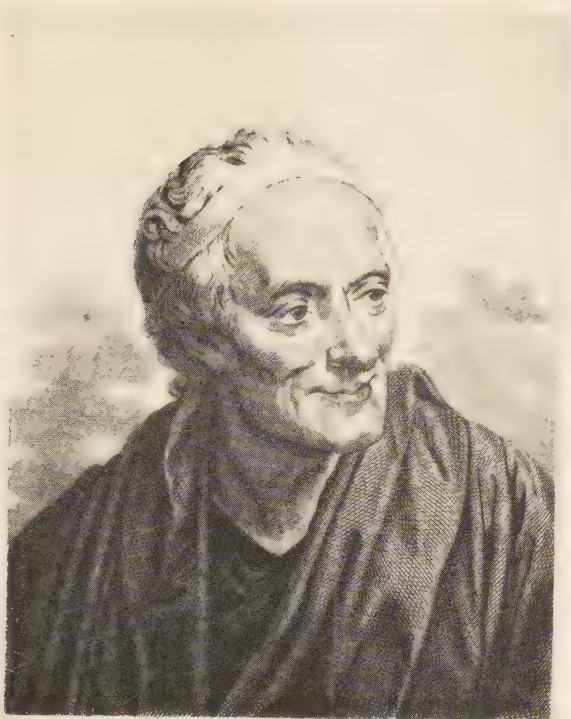
AT Sceaux the salon triumphed in the grand style. The receptions there were magnificent, if one may believe the sketches of Augustin de Saint-Aubin. Crystal lustres hung from the rosettes on the ceiling, spreading a dazzling light. Mirrors on the walls everywhere made the lights seem endless by reflecting them. Heavy brocade curtains hung over all doorways beyond which tables could be seen, set out with valuable trifles. And through the shimmering rooms, over the parquet floor, glided the dainty pumps of the gentlemen à la mode, and rustled the silken petticoats of the gracious ladies, as they swayed to the rhythm of an Allemande, arm in arm, each slim beau with an exquisite belle.

There, too, promenaded ever-young matrons with youthful cavaliers, hungry for amorous adventure. Round the walls sat women, beautiful as Venus, with poets leaning near, whispering verses into their ears. Witticisms flew from mouth to mouth, and recitations or charades were given when a pause occurred in the dance. The refreshment tables made another diversion. They exchanged banter under the screen of the piles of fruit at the buffet, and confessions of love were made in discreet nooks, over glasses of frothing champagne. Then again comes the melody of an Allemande, and again the beaus and belles sway to its rhythm, and the ever-young matrons promenade with their boyish cavaliers. Again the poet whispers gallant verses, and the lady, undulating her hooped skirt, laughs and coquets.

It was different at Cirey. A one-storied, homely little house, standing alone among mountains, fields, and woods, four miles from any other dwelling. Lilliputian rooms, but tastefully furnished, some done in crimson velvet, some in sky-blue moire, but others simply paneled in wood. Exquisitely carved presses and shining mirrors on the walls, figures of Chinese porcelain on table and chimneypiece. Indian rugs and Buddhas of grotesque form in niches, fireplaces settle-high, globes, atlases, instruments for physical experiments, statues of Venus and Hercules, Cupids—that was Cirey, the world that encloses Voltaire and his “divine Émilie.”

The magic of the room in Lancret’s “L’hiver” appeared to live in this little house. The same agreeableness, the same cheery comfort, no luxurious ostentation, no extravagance. It had the quiet content of a country household, rising somewhat earlier than in Paris, taking its coffee about eleven o’clock, sitting awhile in company, and then each going his own way. Supper was the next thing that brought them together. The food was good enough, though plain. The wine was miserable, but Voltaire’s wit made up for it. The open fire shed its red light on the laughing Cupids over the doors and the medallions of smiling women between the panels.

They sat without ceremony round the table whose cover reached almost to the floor, turned over Voltaire’s books, talked, argued, and played with the King Charles spaniel, the pet of the household, whose blue satin basket stands in madame’s bedroom. The divine Émilie would take up a book on geometry in Latin and read aloud. At



Voltaire

every paragraph she hesitated, to think out the translation, and then the French rolled serenely from her lips. Voltaire stood near, and threw in keen comments in the pauses. Then he would bring out his *Pucelle*, and recite some verses. Ladies like Madame de Graffigny hung breathlessly on his words, and yet impatient waited for the end of his reading, so that they could hurry to their cabinet and write down what he had said, sending it as a fragment of the chronicles of Cirey to some dearest friend. Others were less ambitious to write their observations, but they marked everything they saw and heard, to be retailed as a contribution to the legends circulating about Cirey the next time they were in Paris. But not all were so indiscreet. Many took a real pleasure in this country life, where they could recover from the noise and bustle of the great salons of the town. They stayed for days and weeks, and when they went, it was with regret. The President Hénault, whose suppers of Lucullus are as famous as the nights of the Duchesse du Maine, was happy here and notes in his memoirs:

“If you would see a picture of country life and precious retirement, a home of peace and a symbol of autumnal charm, such as intellect alone can give—mutual respect, the magic of philosophy, and the breath of poetry all sharing in its spell—then you must come to Cirey.”

It was, indeed, a wonderful intimacy. The guests seldom exceeded five or six, and they were people who understood one another, coming from similar circles. The little Duchesse du Maine stayed for a while, gilding with her sunny spirit this already happy idyl. Madame de Boufflers,

the dear friend of old King Stanislas of Poland, left her sybaritic court at Lunéville and came to Cirey to talk about the books she had read. Fontenelle came too—drank Madame du Châtelet's sour wine with a wry face, but was vastly amused for all that. The Prussian ambassador, Count Keyserling, was received like a prince and overwhelmed with kindnesses. Father François Jaquis, a sound scholar, passed precious days here, during which, with Émilie's assistance, he completed an important work on mathematics. The famous Helvetius, the mathematician Maupertuis, and many other scholars of renown came to the little house and passed unforgettable hours within its walls.

Only one person did not fit in with this circle and that was Émilie's husband, the marquis. But he disturbed no one; he sat silent during meals, and directly after withdrew to his room for a nap. His life while at Cirey alternated between sleeping and eating, but luckily he was seldom there. He was usually in camp, for war was his only passion. When he did come to his country house he was treated as a guest. He was more a lodger than the owner. He had to thank Voltaire for all the ease of his life, since the money to change this ugly, half-ruined place into a comfortable little château came from the poet's pocket. Really Voltaire was the master and Madame du Châtelet the mistress, and everyone treated them as a married couple. Their union was taken for granted, and the marquis was the only one who did not suspect it.

Everyone who saw the "idol and the nymph," as Madame de Graffigny nicknamed Voltaire and his Émilie, in this their home could have no doubt of the relation be-

tween them. They showed every symptom: the caresses, the chaff, the occasional ill humor, the curtain lectures, the jealousies. Émilie was temperamental in scenes of this kind. She was not ashamed to quarrel with her secret husband in front of her guests; but he almost always kept his philosophical calm. Only occasionally was he sulky when she was too tyrannical, forbidding him to drink any more Rhine wine, or finding fault with the way he was dressed. Then he would shut himself up in his room and not appear again until after much pleading.

Madame du Châtelet's passion for Voltaire seems difficult to understand when one considers the circumstances. She was not attracted to the man but to the philosopher, the poet. Common interests united the strange pair—the woman of twenty-seven and the man of forty. At first there was no talk of love, and Voltaire complained of this. Madame du Châtelet's heart was beating at that time for the Don Juan of the eighteenth century, the Duc de Richelieu; every lady of gallantry threw herself in his way that her name might be coupled with his. But at intimate little suppers in the rue de Long Port, where Voltaire had his bachelor home, the divine Émilie began to show herself not only a woman of learning, but also a woman of passion. Soon the flame was burning so brightly in both that it became a wall of fire, shutting them in.

Paris seemed to her unsafe. There was too much gossip for her to enjoy her love quietly.

"In Paris I shall lose him irretrievably," she wrote to the Duc de Richelieu, now turned from a lover into a friend. "In Cirey I can at least hope that love will be veiled

from the eyes of my husband." At another time she begged the duke to arrange for her husband to stay away from Cirey for a longer time. "I cannot believe I was born to be unhappy; I ask only to be allowed to spend every hour of my life with my loved one."

In Cirey, Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet were happy. After the publication of his "*Lettres philosophique sur les Anglais*" he retreated for the first time to the château and then returned again and again. The divine Émilie followed him everywhere, with fear and trembling at first lest she would lose him. When Crown Prince Frederick invited Voltaire to Germany she tried in every way to keep him from going and persuaded him that he had better wait until the prince became king, when she herself would go with him. Voltaire waited. The love-bonds of the divine Émilie were stronger than the allurements of the Prussian king's son; the homely idyl of Cirey still had its full glamor for him, a glamor composed of love, work, and companionship.

In the gallery of portraits of women of the eighteenth century, Madame du Châtelet is not the most beautiful, but she is one of the most interesting. A pity that La Bruyère did not know her; he would certainly have included her in his "*Caractères*," for she stands out from the women of her time as a distinct personality. There are many different accounts of her appearance. The Marquise du Deffand and Madame de Créqui paint her as a giantess, with unnaturally red cheeks, ugly hands, hideous feet, and a skin like a nutmeg grater. Mesdames de Denis and de Graf-

figny speak of her as handsome and well dressed and most charming to talk to. That Madame du Châtelet possessed both friends and foes seems understandable, when one remembers her domineering nature and her real intellectual superiority. But none of her enemies paints her so unflatteringly as Madame du Deffand. Was it only antipathy or was it jealousy of a successful rival? Who shall say? But we know that for a long time Madame du Châtelet enjoyed the friendship of Voltaire and was known among her friends as "*la femme* Voltaire."

But even Madame du Deffand does not deny that the divine Émilie had a considerable dash of brains, though she blamed her for busying herself with abstract wisdom instead of more elegant intellectual amusements. For a woman to study mathematics and physics, have the audacity to compete for an Academy prize and take upon herself to translate Newton's "Principles" were things to make a lady of the rococo shake her head disapprovingly. A learned woman! And at a period when they seemed born only to trifle, turning everything, even the deepest subjects, into toys! How could an age that only had one serious purpose—to make inconstant love—bring a woman like Madame du Châtelet to life? What an anachronism!

The more closely one studies Émilie the more one sees that she lacked everything that went to make a lady of the rococo—if one refers merely to superficialities. She had not that exquisite art of skimming safely over the surface of situations. Every transitory affair takes for her the proportions of a *grande passion*, such as was fashionable in the days of the great Condé. She does not understand what all

the other women of her time understand—how to appreciate love as a moment's perfume, to be forgotten as soon as it evaporates. She throws herself wholly into a passion, not caring if the flames consume her, not stopping to think whether she will emerge safe and sound. There was something heroic about her, heroic in the sense of devoting her will to the struggle for what she wanted. In the wholehearted strength of her emotions she was more like a woman of the baroque age, and yet in her devotion to her learned studies she resembled a woman of the scholarly times of the romantics.

She really studied, and did not merely read books for the sake of being able to talk about them, as so many of her contemporaries did. A woman who could translate so deep a book as Newton's "Principles" could not have been playing with science. Madame du Châtelet worked at this literally until her last moments. She was expecting the birth of a child—being herself forty-three years of age—and she was more anxious about finishing her task than about her coming motherhood. Voltaire says that she was overtaken by the first pains in the very middle of her translating.

"As Madame du Châtelet sat as usual at her writing table on that last night of her accustomed life, she said—'*Mais je sens quelque chose!*' She had just time to call her maid, who caught a little girl in her apron and carried it to the cradle. The mother herself stopped to put her papers carefully in order and then went to bed."

This woman, who could feel so deeply and passionately, when forty fell in love like a young girl of twenty.

But she had the instincts neither of mother nor wife. She had a harmless old donkey for a husband, but she did not hesitate to make him look a fool in the eyes of the world. She made him the comic figure in a liaison such as Choderlos de Laclos himself could scarcely have imagined. It was a real comedy that she, the admired "princess of the theater," thought out and staged herself.

The prologue was played in Lunéville, at the gay court of old King Stanislas of Poland, where Madame de Boufflers kept a lively, but loose circle. The ruler of this temple of Venus, known as *la dame de volupté*, deceived her royal gallant whose mistress she was, with the officers of his own guard. And the example she set was taken to heart by her friends who followed it faithfully.

In this paradise of love, Voltaire and his divine Émilie found themselves, the king having invited them to his court. This was in 1748. Madame du Châtelet was over forty, and her friend Voltaire was not far from sixty, so that both should have been beyond the days of passion. But Madame du Châtelet seemed not to feel the burden of years; the atmosphere of the Polish court acted on her like an elixir, and a second spring bloomed for her. She made the acquaintance of a young officer of the Guards, Saint-Lambert, who was still wearing Madame de Boufflers's chains. To see him and love him was the work of a moment.

Voltaire was at first enraged at the faithlessness of his companion, but the divine Émilie excused it on the grounds of her temperament and his inability to love; and the philosopher accepted the reproof and the reason and

showed no grudge against the younger man. Madame du Châtelet and Saint-Lambert were therefore able to be happy until the unexpected happened. Madame, now forty-three, suddenly found that she was going to become a mother.

She had not foreseen the possibility and sought advice. Her lovers, the old and the new, racked their brains over the situation. Voltaire suggested that the child had better be included in the "Collected Works of Madame du Châtelet." Then they suddenly remembered the marquis, whom they had almost forgotten. They sent for him, rushed back to Cirey, and after an interval of fourteen years arranged for a restitution of conjugal rights and so found a father for the coming child, whose legitimacy the marquis never for one moment questioned.

The imbroglio was clearing up, the little piece was nearing its final curtain, and everything pointed to a happy ending. Madame du Châtelet, in spite of her age, seemed to have stood it very well; she felt so far restored to strength that she wished to go back to her work. A serious rise in temperature was the result of this imprudence, and a few days later she was dead.

Voltaire was overcome. He could not take it in. In spite of the change in their relations he was bound to her in a close union of souls, and she was the only woman who could understand his more serious studies. Broken, he retired to Cirey, the home of their mutual pleasures and interests. In the empty rooms of that little château in Champagne, where everything spoke of the beloved, he hoped to heal his sorrow. He spent some weeks of loneliness here,

devoting himself to work and to thoughts of the departed, but the more and more pressing invitations of the King of Prussia lured him from his country retreat to Potsdam.

Voltaire lost a companion and fellow worker, but the eighteenth century lost a most original figure in Madame du Châtelet.

“A marvelous talent for blending the charming qualities of her sex with the higher forms of knowledge which we regard as our own prerogative,” wrote Maupertuis after her death. “This phenomenal gift will ensure for her a lasting renown.”

Rheinsberg and Sans-Souci

THE rococo had a charming inspiration when it chose the remote little castle of Rheinsberg for its début in North Germany. It came with graceful impudence, like Watteau's sportive youngsters, to smooth from the brow of Prussia's crown prince the furrows his father's harsh conduct had graven. It came—met with friendly welcome—and remained. Under its magic the old-world building became delightful, for though outwardly it still seemed a rugged stronghold, within it was like a tasteful jewel casket. A spot made for the forgetting of evil days—a haven of sun and serenity!

Frederick and his wife had scarcely settled into Rheinsberg before a gay company began to roam the rooms.

"I have just come back from Rheinsberg, where I and Graf Wartensleben spent several very pleasant days," writes Lieutenant von Borcke to his brother. "The prince holds a small court there and concerts, balls, comedies—in a word, every entertainment that one can imagine—are given. Those who take part in them enjoy themselves greatly. No one could better uphold the dignity of his house than the crown prince."

And how did he uphold the dignity of his house? Not merely as the son of the soldier king who pressed into his service every tall man to be found, no matter what his nationality; nor according to the code of manners of his Tabakskollegium, but as a grand seigneur who had been to school at Versailles. He understood just what importance to assign to every entertainment, this young man of twenty-

four! He led the talk at table. No subject was foreign to him and none too profound. He was never at a loss for a comment. His wit, which was like "a Vestal fire, never extinguished," illumined everything. Opposition was merely a spur, to show his intelligence in a new light. He knew how to bring out the talents of others by tactful encouragement and lightened every serious discussion with jest and whimsicality, so that even the most scholarly debate gained a touch of grace.

Nor did he take less trouble over the *fêtes galantes* that he organized at Rheinsberg; they owed their success to his sparkling humor and gift for entertaining. He took part in everything, for he loved every kind of pleasure, except hunting, which he considered a waste of time and energy. He loved dancing and danced well—lightly and with grace. Best of all, he loved concerts. To his extreme old age they remained his favorite recreation, refreshing him after a day of weary work.

A certain ceremony hedged round these assemblies; one had to receive an invitation, and this was an exceptional mark of favor. A cultured audience would collect in the evening hours. There would be seen the interesting profile of the Graf Keyserling, a very welcome guest at Cirey, a fine connoisseur, with elegant manner in the French mode. Near him the Abbé Jordon, whom Frederick had taken from his cure to become his librarian, and who soon became invaluable to him as adviser in all literary matters. Against a pillar leaned the Baron von Knobelsdorff who had brought the full stamp of the rococo to the park of Rheinsberg and later was to make the Berlin

Opera House and Sans-Souci his lasting masterpieces. The lively Algarotti and Lord Baltimore, fresh from St. Petersburg and with much to tell of that city, came as passing guests.

There were women too—amiable princesses, and charming ladies-in-waiting, who spoke French without accent; for Frederick still took the view that “women cast an indescribable brilliance across one’s daily life. Quite apart from the obligations of love, they are indispensable in company, for without them every entertainment falls flat.”

Afterwards, when at Sans-Souci, he thought otherwise. He did not care to see women there, with the sole exception of Barberina when she floated over the parquetry floor in the dancing poses of Lancret’s Camargo.

The concert would begin, perhaps, with a suite by Graun. Like silver laughter rippled the notes of the *Allegro Fantasia* from the spinet. The fiddle voiced the theme; the chevalier on the flute accompanied rather loudly and awkwardly. *Scherzando*, as if mocking the flute-player, the violas broke into tremolo. Then the ’cello sang the cantilena of an aria. Its tones melted tenderly into those of the other instruments, plaintive, sobbing, dying away. The melancholy grace of a minuet followed the pause. Again the violins dominated with their silken-soft tones, keeping the lead until a cheerful gigue started up, and with a babbling chatter from all the instruments together the suite came to an end.

The crown prince was a critic. He found fault with Chasot and said that his should be the fate of Marsyas, be-

cause from the tender flute he elicited the braying of trumpets. Then he took out his own flute. A concerto by Quantz was laid on the music desks. The first tones were a little unsteady, as if he were nervous of playing a wrong note. But he soon gained confidence. In his mouth, the little wooden reed was transformed into an oracle, voicing a new revelation of beauty. The runs under his fingers rounded into a string of glimmering pearls. And the tones fluttered out through the high window to Knobelsdorff's park, and waked the little cherubs, who poked their angels' heads from the dark green boskets.

"And when the night sweeps down, Venus demands her toll." Sometimes there was heard the sound of eager voices; a dozen or so men, glowing with youth, would sit down together to a banquet. They tasted the joys of friendship, sounded the lyre in honor of Pallas Athene, sacrificed to Bacchus, and grew warm over Wolf's *Metaphysics*. It was a cheerful symposium, forerunner of those philosophical suppers at Sans-Souci later on. And he himself, the "Marquis de Brandenburg," composed a poetic chronicle of this Round Table:

A friendly circle, well content,
Not large, selected with some care,
Well-chosen words are eloquent,
Of everything and everywhere.
They edge their wit with laughter ringing;
Discourse upon philosophy;
Thus grave and gay together mingling
Secure the truest harmony.

The Marquis de Brandenburg saw no one in the morning. While the guests were enjoying freedom, one to

read, another to think, a third to draw, a fourth to write, a fifth to play some instrument, Frederick remained invisible. Only the initiated knew what he was doing, whether he had gone to exercise his regiment in Ruppín, or whether he had been in his own room since seven o'clock, buried in books on the first principles of science. In these early hours he framed his first political pamphlets, including his diatribe against Cardinal Fleury, the "anti-machiavelli," and from his pen flowed the numerous letters to Rollin, d'Argens, Wolf, and Voltaire—letters which disclose depth of feeling.

"Kings without friendship, given and returned, are in my eyes like the log that Jupiter gave to the Frogs for their King. I recognize ingratitude only by the fact that it has hurt me. Without wishing to flatter myself on possessing feelings that are not really in my heart, I can yet affirm that I would renounce all greatness if I thought it incompatible with friendship."

So the years at Rheinsberg went by for the Marquis de Brandenburg, alternating between study and amusement, between earnest reading and recreation that alleviated the strain of the too strenuous philosophy—philosophy which "did not readily allow its stern forehead to be stroked by the Graces."

So the years went by—the years that he himself has described as the happiest of his life.

On the twenty-sixth of October, 1740, Frederick, who had occupied the Prussian throne since the thirty-first of May, wrote from Rheinsberg:

"Dear Voltaire

"The most unexpected death prevents my opening my heart to you as usual and chatting as I should like to do. The emperor is dead. He was first a private individual, then a king and then an emperor. Eugen won his fame for him, but alas, it is now stained. He has died a bankrupt, and his death destroys all my peace. I think by June it will be more a matter of powder, soldiers, and trenches, than actresses, ballets, and plays. And so I must postpone the work we had planned to do."

His forebodings were correct; the Austrian succession obliged him to take up his sword. Five hard years of war followed, with no time for his private amusements. Not till peace was declared at Dresden, leaving Frederick in possession of Silesia—an important treaty which guaranteed the peace of his kingdom for some time and gave him the chance to recuperate both mentally and bodily—did the king's old interests revive. Rheinsberg no longer pleased him. He longed for a Versailles of his own, a palace to represent himself, but not his military side, the other—the artistic.

Not far from Potsdam, from wasteland and damp meadows, there was formed a wonderful park with shady groves, illuminated rotundas, labyrinthine mazes closed in with stiff hedges, inviting grottoes in which shameless nymphs were hidden, basins that served as mirrors for marble goddesses. Terraces led down from the wild hills, which were once crowned with oaks, and were now pasture land and arable fields; between the terraces vines were planted and the choicest fruit trees, brought from Mar-

seilles, to furnish fruit for the king's table. And on the summit of the hill sat the queen of this fairy transformation—Sans-Souci, the German Versailles, the sweetest flower of the German rococo, the pleasure house in which the days of Rheinsberg were to be relived in finer and grander style.

When Voltaire, having mourned the death of Madame du Châtelet at Cirey, came at last to Sans-Souci, in the summer of 1750, he could not find words to express his astonishment over this royal temple of the Muses.

"At last I have reached this once waste spot, which is now not less beautiful than famous. A hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, no procurators, opera and plays, philosophy and poetry, a hero who is both a philosopher and a poet, greatness and amiability, grenadiers and Muses, fiddles and the trumpets of war, Platonic meals, talk and freedom. Who would believe it? And yet—it is true." And so wonderful did this seem to the Frenchman that he repeated it for emphasis—"And yet—it is true." A few weeks later he gave his niece a sketch of his day's work. "My work is—to do nothing. I am enjoying the leisure. An hour a day is given to the king, to polish his prose and verse a little for him; I am his grammarian, not his chamberlain. The rest of the day I have to myself, and the evenings close with a pleasant supper."

It was these suppers, or to express it more correctly, this Round Table of philosophy, that gave the characteristic touch to the society of Sans-Souci. They filled the evenings of the king with warmth and helped him to forget momentarily the solitude that followed from the



*Frederick the Great and Voltaire at Sans Souci
From a painting by Schobel*

lack of an intimate family circle. The guests at that Round Table were all people of originality. Voltaire for a time took the leading place. Frederick's admiration for him was intense and again and again he had begged him to come, at last sending his ambassador to invite him. Now he had his wish; the greatest Frenchman of his time was his guest, and he could talk over every point of science or art he had wished to discuss. But when he entered into personal relations with Voltaire he learned to recognize his weaknesses. Boundless vanity, ill-nature, spite, cunning. Frederick was annoyed and repaid in the same coin. One little revenge was followed by another; unbearable intrigue led to their separating again, those two great men who could be friends only at a distance.

Others took Voltaire's place. The Rheinsberg friends were no longer living; the only one of them who could still cheer the Round Table with his good humor was Knobelsdorff. The president of the Academy came from Berlin, Maupertuis, once the friend and guest of Voltaire at Cirey, and later the butt of that ill-natured pamphlet, "Diatribes du Docteur Akakia, médecin du pape," which blew him from the pedestal of fame. A welcome guest was the Marquis d'Argens, that original mixture of adventurer, rip, philosopher, and author. "Old Fritz" was on confidential terms with him, and enjoyed a war of wits with him. The king did not spare his sarcasm, but the marquis, delighted to cross swords with so affable and courteous a king, met him with his own weapons, not always to the satisfaction of the royal host, who would revenge himself for this somewhat too audacious equality with some prac-

tical joke or other. Baron Pöllnitz was another cheerful member of the Round Table, and used to belong to Frederick William's Tabakskollegium. "Old Fritz" was not particularly fond of him, but was glad enough to see him at supper because he recounted with zest his adventures, travels, and extravagances.

The talk would swing from gravity to mirth. Sometimes they played little comedies. In one instance a pastor from a tiny Pomeranian village had fallen foul of the king in his sermon, likening him to Herod. The Round Table heard of this and invited the pastor in official language to appear before the Oberkonsistorium, which of course was composed of the king and his comrades, all dressed in clerical attire. The king himself played the part of president.

The pastor was bewildered when he asked the question: "How many kings of Judah had the name of Herod?"

Trembling he replied: "One." On which the president very seriously took him to task, saying that such ignorance was a disgrace to his cloth.

"We shall have to suspend you from office—or at any rate stop your preaching for a very long time. Yet we shall not forget that mercy is demanded of us by our religion. We therefore remit your punishment, in the hope that you will change your ways. But you must give all your leisure time to study, and above all you must never preach on subjects that you do not understand. Now go, my brother. Ride back to your parsonage and humble yourself upon your knees before your God and do not forget that this worshipful consistory will always have an eye on you."

Frequently the Round Table sat until late into the night. When it rose the tapers were often burnt out. Sometimes the king would fall asleep from weariness, for in his later years he had little rest. When his witty tongue was still, his eagle eye closed, all the life fled from the company. Silent and uncomfortable they sat, waiting for him to wake. Sometimes that was not till dawn came through the window. Then he would rouse, rub the sleep from his eyes, and turn courteously to his guests:

“It is four o’clock, my friends. You can go to bed and sleep on into the day but I—I must sit down to work.”

Already the page would be standing in the doorway with the basket full of letters sent by the secretary of state.

The Kingdom in the Rue Sainte-Honoré

THE salon was at the height of its glory in the middle of the eighteenth century. Society, which had fled from town, had now tired of its pastoral pose—just at the moment when Rousseau was preparing to take the stage—and was again seeking excitement in Paris. No illustrious stranger coming to that city had cause to complain of lack of entertainment. The doors of the salons were all opened to him; he was welcomed everywhere. His only trouble would be to choose where to go, for though each salon had its own day in the week, there were so many that a month would not have been sufficient to go the round of them.

The grand style reigned at the Temple where Madame de Boufflers, the mistress of the Prince de Conti, did the honors. There would be as many as a hundred and fifty guests at once, all people of note, passing a couple of hours gaily with the clever and charming hostess, whose youth never seemed to wither. That one was happy on whom she bestowed her smile; he felt himself paid for his whole evening and sought no further entertainment. He might now enjoy the music, which was under the direction of the prince. Jelyotte's beautiful voice would ring out, and the countess's little daughter-in-law sing her delightful songs to the harp. So bewitching was Madame de Boufflers's smile that both youths and young girls tried to win it, as if it had been a costly jewel, a talisman of happiness.

But this Muse of the Temple, beloved by young and old, had a rival, and one of her own name. This was the Duchesse de Boufflers, née Neufville-Villeroi, who first

became a dangerous rival of the Countess Amélie when Maréchale de Luxembourg. She was once one of the fascinating ladies of the Regency; now she lived in Paris like a queen, and gave two suppers a week, to which only the most exclusive were invited, for the maréchale kept keen watch on manners and ways, and looked on any breaches with rigid disapproval. That is how her salon formed the France which, according to those unequaled painters of that world, the brothers de Goncourt, "was so proud of its renown, so instinct with grace and rare elegance . . . that it became a social world, influencing Europe, a school of manners for all nations, a criterion of social custom—until 1789."

The salon of a financier, Monsieur de la Popelinière, was not so exclusive, and it was graced for a time with the talents of a delicious Muse, whom Voltaire named Polymnia. This was Mademoiselle Deshayes, the daughter of an actress, whom the wealthy Popelinière had to marry at the urgent request of Cardinal Fleury after she had been his mistress for twelve years. She knew how to make of her small kingdom a paradise of charm, which offered every amusement which the whims of the well-bred world could desire: suppers, theatrical performances, premières, readings, concerts, ballets, and balls. The house was like a pigeoncote; from morning to evening the guests came and went, now to hear a mass composed by Gossec, now the playing of the violinist Mondonville, now to admire the dances arranged by Deshayes, the ballet-master, and now merely to talk to the beautiful hostess.

This merry-go-round came to an abrupt stop one day

when they heard that Monsieur de la Popelinière had turned his charming wife out of doors. The tempter was not difficult to name; it was Richelieu. Even this woman had failed to resist the snares of that Don Juan, and had gone the way of so many women of her time. Popelinière did not intend to turn his salon into a cloister, however; he married soon after a Mademoiselle de Mondran, in the hope that she would restore the glory of his house. But Mademoiselle de Mondran was not Madame de la Popelinière. With the disappearance of that charmer, the salon in Passy lost its attraction and became a memory.

Yet other salons were talked about in the middle of the eighteenth century. The de Goncourts have characterized them all with meticulous care. There was the salon of the Maréchale de Beauveau, which was quite a school of elegance, the more so because it was distinguished without constraint. There was the salon of the Duchesse de Villeroi, famous for its merriment, which for luxury could put that of Monsieur de la Popelinière in the shade. There were the elegant suppers of Madame Filleul, and the balls of the Comtesse de Sassanage, and the concerts of the Comtesse d'Houdetot. Such a wave of social entertainment was sweeping over Paris that the witty Abbé Galiani aptly named the city the "Café de l'Europe."

There were other salons on which the de Goncourts dwell with more significance, salons where society was not wanted merely as society, but for another end; salons with a purpose—to promote the causes of knowledge and art, and where only one form of entertainment was offered—esprit. In such literary salons the period of the rococo was

rich; they flourished in the country, in little châteaux in remote places, like Cirey, and in the seclusion of the convent, where aging mondaines like Madame du Deffand watched undisturbed the progress of the times, and criticized from quiet contemplative islands the stormy sea of the world without. In such salons the traditions of the Hôtel de Rambouillet were treasured; they built the stage for the display of all that was important in art and literature; they were the arenas in which leading intellects measured themselves one with another, to an audience of intelligent women. They were the literary consciences of their time.

The famous literary salons of the rococo age formed a chain; each linked onto the next, or, to put it more correctly, inherited from its predecessor, and from this inheritance built yet further. If one goes back to the beginning of the century, one finds that, at the time of the Regency with all its heedless pleasures, it was the salon of the Marquise de Lambert at which the banner of culture was upheld. Here Fontenelle was to be seen, and Montesquieu took his first stumbling steps in conversation under the tutelage of Madame du Deffand; here on Thursday a battle would rage about Homer between Houdard de la Motte and Madame Dacier, which was brought to a friendly end only by means of a champagne supper at the Restaurant Valincour.

When the Marquise de Lambert died, Madame de Tencin took her place and guided the destinies of literature with much success until 1749. Marivaux, Fontenelle, Mon-

tesquieu, all faithful friends of the lady who was dead, went to her salon now in the rue Saint-Honoré. The clever woman, whose character was not irreproachable, attracted everyone to her who was noted for wit or talent. Even foreigners like Horace Walpole, for whom the Marquise du Deffand had a passion when seventy years old, or a man of the world like Lord Chesterfield, whose letters to his son are still readable, went to this salon and spread its fame abroad.

But for Madame de Tencin too the hour struck, and she had to hand on her fame to another. This was her friend, Marie Thérèse Rodet, the widow of a rich glass manufacturer named Geoffrin, who had once openly said that she went to Madame de Tencin "to see what she could inherit" from her salon. Her succession seemed so natural to everyone that no surprise was felt when old Fontenelle, who had already seen two great literary salons come to an end, on hearing of Madame de Tencin's death, calmly said: "Very well, then—I shall have to spend my Thursdays at Madame Geoffrin's." And then and there he went off to Madame Geoffrin, whose house was in the same street as Madame de Tencin's but a little lower down.

Debucourt has left a sketch which gives us an accurate picture of the ways and the people frequenting this salon. The room is large but not overelaborate. The parquetry floor is finely made and of gaily colored woods. On the walls hang landscapes such as Claude Lorrain or Nicolas Poussin might have painted, genre pictures in the style of Lancret, portraits, and allegorical conceptions. In the center, between the two doors, stands the bust of Voltaire. The

company is grouped on each side of it. Most of them are looking attentively toward the table where the famous actor, Lekain, declaims a scene from Voltaire's "Orpheline de la Chine." The impression his words are making is seen on the faces of the listeners; some show pleasure and others a cool criticism.

In the foreground sits a woman of middle age; a lace cap encircles her round face, in which only the nose juts out sharply. One cannot call her handsome, but she looks good-natured, gentle, and clever; her eyes show these qualities plainly. There is something motherly about her; Poniatowski, later King of Poland, called her "maman." She is the owner of the house, friendly Madame Geoffrin. Her glance passes thoughtfully down the room; one would think that she is not listening to the reading but she sees and hears everything. She knows that as soon as Lekain has finished, she will be called upon to exercise her judgment. The debate will begin, and she must bring out her accustomed "*Allons, voilà qui est bien*" at just the right moment to prevent the discussion overstepping the bounds of politeness. For that is her great talent—one might call it an art—to handle life with due regard to form. That is why Vienna and Warsaw both paid her the compliment of receiving her like a princess, overwhelming her with honors, bourgeoisie though she was—a member of the class on which the higher ranks of society look down.

And who is the old fellow who sits at her left, bowed forward, his hands clasped on his lap, and at whom the Prince de Conti, who is sitting in the place of honor next his hostess, looks so sharply, as if not certain that he is

really alive? It is Fontenelle and he is a hundred years old. Like a ghost from the spring of the baroque age he seems among the children of the rococo, which will soon be at an end too; he is a living chapter of history, at whom all look with respect. Behind his back the spirit of youth is seen; the beautiful Comtesse d'Houdetot, with whom Rousseau was to fall so passionately in love, chatters with Montesquieu, perhaps about the "Défense," which so quickly silenced those who carped at his famous "De l'Esprit des Lois." She little thinks that she herself will so shortly be among the dead, even before Fontenelle himself, the disciple before the teacher.

With an elbow resting on the pedestal that holds the bust of Voltaire stands d'Argental, the poet's friend. Not far from him is the tall figure of Turgot, to whom, later, will fall the work of rescuing France's finances. He is standing with Diderot and the national economist, Quesnay, none of the three looking particularly interested in the reading. One might say the same of the well-nourished man with the full-moon face, who, one knee crossed over the other, is turned to the left in his chair. It is Leclerc de Buffon. He leans over the back of his chair, talking to the naturalist Daubenton behind him. That phrase-making which he practices in his writings—did he not say in his "Discours sur le style" that only works written in good style deserved immortality?—he translates into every-day life, and loves to ape a nonchalance not really in his character.

His neighbor, clever Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, is a striking contrast to him. She is not yet at home in salons,

for she has only lately left the quiet provinces to come and live with her aunt, Madame du Deffand, in her convent of St. Joseph. It all seems like a dream to her, but susceptible as she is, she is quickly accustoming herself to the new life and now takes in silently all the details of this great world in which she will one day herself be a leader. She sees many well-known people whom she has already met at her aunt's—d'Alembert, Hénault, Turgot—but many strangers too, with whom she now makes acquaintance and who become her faithful friends when she has a salon of her own. Here in this salon they are all to be met—the men of whom France is proud; not one is missing, no matter what his name or rank may be.

Yet there is one who does not appear in this sketch of Debucourt's, one who was the soul of the salon, without whom they could not have got on—the Abbé Galiani. The reason for his absence is easy to understand; the sketch was taken in 1755 at which time Galiani was occupied with mineralogical studies in Naples. It was four years after that he became a member of the Neapolitan embassy. At court they were somewhat astonished at sight of the little, hump-backed dwarf who had been chosen in Naples for the post of secretary to the embassy. Galiani saw and understood, getting out of the difficult position by answering the king's greeting with:

“Sire, you see only the secretary's shadow. He himself will come later.”

This pleased the king and he laughed. Galiani had won his favor. But life at the court did not suit the abbé. He longed for an audience for his gifts of wit and intellect,

and he found this when he received the entrée to the salons through the kind offices of the Encyclopedists.

An abbé was a necessary furnishing to a rococo salon. He was the jester of those times. He had to tell amusing stories, pay court to the ladies, give them the latest news; in short, he had humorously to intervene when the talk seemed likely to become too serious. "*Qu'en dit l'abbé?*" This question, which gave Lavreince the inspiration for a bewitching picture, always came when a tedious subject was to be interrupted and the conversation again to become general. It was the cue for the abbé to show the range of his talents, toss off bon mots, let slip little cynicisms with disarming candor, turn paradoxes, with an expressive face and gesture that stirred the company to mirth.

When this rôle fell to Galiani everyone felt that it had never been filled so well before. This delightful Italian harlequin with the head of a Machiavelli on his shoulders, to use Marmontel's phrase about him, became the favorite of the whole circle. He went to Holbach, where Roux and Darcet were exchanging their theories on the earth and Marmontel was discussing his elements of literature, where Diderot was preaching with the authority of a pulpit orator on morals and art; he came to defy these atheists of the salon, to pierce their praises with the shafts of his wit, to throw his wig up in the air for the amusement of the company, and to turn somersaults over the backs of the chairs. He came to prove, with his burlesque jokes and his assumed folly, that the Encyclopedists were not a hair better than the theologians.

The lively abbé was a regular guest in the pale blue

boudoir of his friend Madame d'Épinay, and later took in hand her overflowing correspondence, waiting patiently on his "tabouret" for the end of her toilet, humming little songs and telling piquant anecdotes, or, when his friend was in the mood, philosophizing over love and religion. This favorite of the ladies went every Monday and Wednesday to the kingdom of the rue Saint-Honoré, as the salon of Madame Geoffrin was always called. But there he talked politics with ministers of state, and with the literary men discussed new books, or chatted with historians about old documents and archeological discoveries, or brought his shrewd sense to bear on the economic outlook of the country—later embodying his conclusions in his clever "*Dialogues sur le commerce des Blés.*" He let his humor have its way when chatting to the ladies and showed himself now laughing, now earnest, now a philosopher with frowning brow and melancholy eyes, and now a licensed fool, with mad jokes, inviting glances, and knavish smiles—but always a wit such as has rarely been seen, of a type that could only flourish during the age of the rococo.

PART IV

Sensibility



A DESIRE to fly from the world characterized the opening of the rococo period and the same desire is found toward its end, but the two impulses are distinct, having different causes. The first was a flight from Versailles, to let long-suppressed emotions have their vent and to delight in a new form of social gathering. Later satiety produced the need to recapture freshness, a longing for nature. Then it was the embarkment for Cythera, but now a sentimental journey to the home of Héloïse. Then Watteau was the guide, but now Rousseau.

In 1761 appeared the book written by the watchmaker's son from Geneva as an attack on the most famous writer of the day—the book which banished the Hermit of Ferney from people's thoughts and contributed powerfully to the transition from the age of the rococo to the age of sensibility. “Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse,” according to Lenx, was “the best book that had ever graced French letters”; and Karoline Flachsland studied French in order to read it, although she found French verbs very painful to learn! This tale of the well-born lady who gave herself to the low-born tutor and then married a man she did not love, preaching morals to the lover of her youth, had a fascination for contemporary readers. The streets in which the booksellers who sold the book were located were so full of people in elegant equipages that the traffic was brought to a stop.

It was the sentimental atmosphere of the book which affected the public, even more strongly than Richardson and Sterne had done. It was the breath of the coming revo-

lution. All felt that the age of gallantry had stifled real emotion, and all were longing once again to experience deep feelings, even if merely because they were the mode of the moment. It was suddenly realized that there were other pleasures than those Paris offered—the joys of nature, the inexpressible happiness of a country life, as Rousseau painted it. Never before his time had the soulful influence of nature on man been so powerfully set forth in literature. His word-pictures made them smell the scent of the woods, the sweet, sleepy breath of the wild flowers; they saw those snowy peaks, those green valleys, in the gold of the setting sun. Moonlight scenes of purling brooks on which the clouds were reflected made them dream with longing of all the moods to which one could give oneself up with a full heart. In Germany even more than in France was this the case, for in France the traditional habit of society was not so easily broken.

It was characteristic that French society took their luxurious surroundings and brilliant program of pleasures into the country with them, even when the fashionable doctor, Tronchin, prescribed a simple country life, early rising, long walks, and fresh milk. There was a lively group at Chantilly, where the Prince de Conti had his summer residence, and at Chanteloup, which the Duchesse de Choiseul had chosen as her country house. Here the guests found amusements of all sorts: hunting, rambles, balls, and, when the weather kept them indoors, a lively salon. Receptions in the grand style were arranged, still carrying the stamp of the rococo—romantic love, *déjeuners* in the open, masquerades in the park, and every-

where delightful surprises; but sensibility was mingling tender nuances with these things. The sheep had pale blue ribbons, the shepherds proudly wore their gay smocks. The lute had given way to the melting tones of the harp, which echoed from shady arbors in the parks and sang touching songs about "poor Jacques." Everyone sentimentalized, making love and shedding tears of emotion, with the same extravagance with which ten years before they had indulged their taste for laughter.

How differently this wave of sentimentality affected Germany where a pleasure in humble things was taken as the sign of sensibility. Luise von Ziegler traveled far and wide, visiting palaces, gardens, country houses, fine buildings, without feeling at all impressed by them.

"They say they are wonderful," she said, "but I have the courage to admit that I would rather see a thatched cottage, for there life is simpler and happier; at least, so far as I know country folk."

A flower, found by chance in a book and discovered to have been placed there by the hands of a friend; a trinket from an admirer; a crust of black bread, eaten under the trees to the singing of the birds overhead; a faithful dog curled at one's feet: these things gave greater delight to the sentimentalists than the most sublime works of art.

They esteemed idyllic the life of the country and forswore all comforts. They could think of no more agreeable pursuit than a ramble through the woods with friends of similar tastes. For where could their emotions be more faithfully mirrored than by "Nature, so full of feeling"? Here, they felt, was their kingdom, and no one must dis-

turb their peace. And when the moon sent down silvery beams on their evening walk, they thought themselves transported to heaven.

"A few days ago," Karoline Flachsland told her betrothed, "I was in a beautiful wood and beyond it was a mill and the most lovely valley. We encamped and dreamed far into the night; and then, as the other women drove home, I walked back all alone with seven men. My company was, frankly, not to my taste, and, though walking with them, I really wandered through that wood alone. It was so heavenly quiet, so wonderful—and the moon came through the still leaves, now clouded over and now clear as day! I was so moved in that sacred wood that I could have kneeled down and prayed."

So the new spirit of companionship developed. The full outlet of one's feelings was the band that linked people together. It was not circumstances or things that formed the center of interest but man; his nature, his wishes, his thoughts. The older generation whose emotional ideas were rooted in the rococo period shook their heads amazed at the change. With them intellect had had undisputed control of all entertainment, and they had seen in the juggling of wit the finest flower of culture. They could not realize that all this had been suddenly thrown aside. The old man at Ferney wrinkled his forehead over Rousseau, the Apostle, and riddled that "monstrous work, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*" with his sarcasm. Madame du Deffand made merry in her own way over the latest craze of Parisian society, seeking pleasure in the country. She thought the pictures of shepherds that hung in her salon were a suffi-

cient substitute for country life. Others of the old régime showed their surprise at this amazing change. But their outcries were not heeded.

Even the conservative court was fascinated by the new tastes, though secretly. Marie Antoinette was the first to pay homage to this revolutionary spirit; for in the mirrored rooms of Versailles she suffered from ennui, having been used to a more homely, patriarchal life. She had the charming little Château Trianon built, in which she could live as she pleased. Here she could put off her royal dignity and, freed from etiquette, could lead a life of sentiment with her more intimate friends. While the "noble souls" of Darmstadt climbed the hills to read Klopstock's new odes, and drink milk, the queen would indulge her literary tastes in the fine white dining-room of the Trianon, and drink milk too, which she herself served to her guests in delicate little Sèvres cups.

The Muse of the Encyclopedia

THE convent played a strange and many-sided part in the life of the eighteenth century. It was no longer a place of retreat for the pious, who sought their salvation from the wiles of Satan there, nor was it the refuge of deceived lovers or souls bowed down by evil fate, but the asylum for the unmarried, the harbor for once notorious women in their old age, the anteroom of the great world, the academy of fine manners, the salon in miniature. Here the noble lords brought their weary lady-loves, who wanted to win back to respect and reputation through the convent coif; here the mistresses of the king would shelter, when they had lost their influence on politics; here the little Parisian ladies came to receive the polish they would later need to direct a salon with distinction; and here came those who had been leaders of society, when they were no longer in a position to maintain a big house, but wished to watch the events of the day from a distance.

In St. Joseph's Convent, the very rooms in which the Montespan had reflected on the loss of her beauty, housed in the middle of the eighteenth century an old blind lady, who was usually sitting, thoughtful and serious, in a great armchair, playing with a pair of lovely Angora cats, when her friends came to visit her. She was the Marquise du Deffand, a toast in the days of the Regency and a past mistress of the art of living, but now a withered matron, embittered, whose marble-white face came to life only when the talk turned on intellectual subjects. Then her warm impulsive temperament was evident—a tempera-

ment that, like Madame du Châtelet's, knew no half-measures, but when it loved glowed in open flame and when it hated was cold and unforgiving. One would scarcely have believed that in this mummylike figure there still lived so fiery a spirit of youth as her letters to Horace Walpole, the chosen friend of her seventy-year-old heart, prove indisputably that it did.

This wonderful old lady, who usually rose at six in the afternoon, collected round her in the evenings a circle of distinguished men. President Hénault, who, in the middle of the century, was the lover of all women, an accomplished man of the world and a friend of literature, a connoisseur of the classics, an unequalled gourmet, was one of her guests. It was through his energetic action that her marriage to the foolish du Deffand was annulled. She had been forced to marry when only twenty, and she never forgot what she owed to the president in this matter, repaying him with a life-long friendship.

D'Alembert was another intimate. He lived near and came to enjoy the stimulus and refreshment of an exchange of views with his fellow intellectuals. The whole Encyclopedia visited Madame du Deffand: Buffon, the naturalist, the Abbé Morellet, Galiani's jealous rival who has left us a portrait of Madame Geoffrin, that fine intellect and charming talker, Marmontel, Turgot, La Harpe, and a host of other famous men. The company gathered round Madame du Deffand was not so numerous as that of Madame Geoffrin, but it was exceptionally stimulating. Many a weighty subject was aired here by the Encyclopedia, and now and then from the lips of the hostess would

fall a sharp, even perhaps a malicious bon mot, which the next day would be repeated all over Paris.

In these rooms the Gallic wit was still respected, that wit which found in Voltaire its greatest triumph; the *jeu d'esprit* here proffered its last blossoms. Here all display of feeling, all exaggerated rhetoric were still considered bad form when the star of Rousseau was already shining in the firmament and the influence of Richardson and Sterne was affecting the other salons. But one day sensibility would show itself even in the St. Joseph Convent, and Madame du Deffand, the obstinate enemy of all eccentricity, would be unable to prevent the new spirit of the times from spreading its wings in her immediate presence.

What led to this revolution? Who was the apostle who so boldly confronted the old marquise? Was it the hermit of Montmorency, the passionate adorer of Madame d'Houdetot? One would not be surprised at that. But it was a gentle, delicate, dreamy creature, who little intended a revolutionary blow—a being who hid beneath her unpretentious appearance only a heart that longed for love. It was Madame du Deffand's own niece, Julie de Lespinasse.

True romance of the rococo played round this girl's birth. She was the offspring of a love affair that the marquise's brother had with the beautiful Comtesse d'Albon. The birth had to be concealed because of the mother's position, and so the child was given the name of Lespinasse after a small property belonging to the countess. Brought up in the quiet of the country, in which her early maturing, passionate spirit could find no outlet, left by the death of

her mother in a precarious situation and in terror of the tyrannical interference of her mother's relations, she went to a convent for a time, seeking peace in vain; and then, after some hesitation, she accepted her aunt's invitation to go to her as companion, perhaps because this seemed the most favorable of the chances life had to offer her. The relations, who were anxious to keep Julie's birth a secret, were displeased at this, and it took all the marquise's diplomatic talents, which were great, to overcome the opposition. If she had guessed what a dangerous rival she was taking into her house, she would certainly not have acted as she did.

From the very first, when Julie came to live at the convent of St. Joseph, it seemed as if Madame du Deffand's salon had taken on another character—as if a new spirit had broken its way in. Without their intending it, the interest of the guests turned from the old blind marquise to the young girl of twenty-one, who was not beautiful in any way, but who had a great gift of sympathy. Hénault, that friend of women, who stood on the threshold of the sixties, at once felt the charm of her presence. So did the Chevalier d'Aydie, whose love affair with the beautiful Circassian Aissé had been the talk of Paris two decades before. In the footsteps of these two elderly gallants the younger men followed. Even Madame du Deffand's most trusted friend d'Alembert was faithless.

The tragedy of this affair was the unconsciousness of the marquise, beneath whose blind eyes a plot was being formed, yet one which had no malicious purpose, but simply sprang from natural circumstances. Since the old

lady rose at such a late hour, the guests used to arrive a little earlier to talk to the niece, whose lodging was on the floor above. This procedure, beginning accidentally, became established as a custom, and in the end, in talking to the companion, they forgot the mistress.

When she learned what had been going on behind her back her anger was terrible. All the revengeful, evil feelings of her nature came to the surface, and she poured the poison of contempt on the poor girl, whom she nicknamed sarcastically "the Muse of the Encyclopedia," declaring that the Virgin Mary had better take care or she would find God the Father lured away from her. The marquise declined emphatically to share her friends with the Lespinasse and she told them to choose between herself and her niece. Her disillusionment was painful when she found that her friends, including d'Alembert, ranged themselves on Julie's side. The girl could not remain longer in the convent. She had to find a new lodging, which was not easy, as her means were small and she was unwilling to renounce the social intercourse which was the sole happiness of her life. Many friends came to her aid. Madame Geoffirin helped with money, and the Maréchale de Luxembourg with furniture; and, in 1764, she was able to open a small salon of her own.

The whole circle of the Encyclopedists now went over to the rue Saint-Dominique. All the plans of campaign which used to be talked over in Madame du Deffand's salon were now discussed here, and Julie de Lespinasse became indeed the Muse of the Encyclopedia. This important undertaking grew and developed in the atmosphere of

her salon, and under her care the talents of a d'Alembert, a Condorcet, and a Chamfort became fruitful. She excelled in the art of bringing out the best in each one, of handling each according to his temperament, outshining even her aunt, to whom, however, she referred as her teacher.

"She gathered her people here and there in society," recorded Marmontel in his memoirs, "but she chose them so well that when they assembled it was like an experienced hand striking the chords of an instrument. To continue the simile I might add that she played on that instrument with an art that knew no bounds." She knew how to regulate the discussions and through remarks interjected bring in fresh subject matter. With a rare discretion, now soothing, now inflaming, she spun the threads of the talk and turned from one theme to another. Never be wearisome—that was the first condition of her salon. She made exacting demands on the people in her circle, and felt unhappy if the conversation did not flow as smoothly as it should have done.

"The talk last night," she once wrote, "was like one of those insipid romances at which both reader and author yawn. One has to console oneself as did the King of Prussia on another regrettable occasion, when he said 'We'll do better another time.'"

But as a rule the talk was so arresting that strangers who were there for the first time did not want to go. The Danish ambassador Baron von Gleichen was one of these.

What so enchanted the guests was the variety of the talk, besides the talent of the hostess herself. Chamfort would come and read his panegyric on Lafontaine. Grimm

was often there after his return from St. Petersburg, and told many tales of the Semiramis of the North. Little d'Alembert, in his high alto voice, would read his scientific sketches. Diderot with his paradoxes would rouse the company to excitement, which Marmontel's easy reading of one of his moral tales would soothe. And when one of the intimates happened to be traveling he would take part in the evenings from afar, sending accounts of interesting experiences, which one of the others, often Julie herself, would read aloud.

This woman whose social talents were admired by her contemporaries, was more than a woman of the world—she was a heroine. Not even d'Alembert, who lived under the same roof with her, had a suspicion of the bodily and mental torment which she suffered. She was consumptive, but the physical pain seemed to her to become one with the mental trouble in which her stormy temperament had plunged her. She confessed later that through passion her heart and soul had withered.

In the depths of her being she had outgrown the rococo and anticipated with her sensitive nature the coming age of sentiment, and she could not live without exalted devotion. The need to love and be loved was so strong in her that it was like life itself to her. And when love was denied her, she sought by friendship, touchingly devoted friendship, to replace it.

Of this kind was her union with d'Alembert. That quiet friendship lasted undisturbed until Julie's death and always brought her peace even after hours of passionate torment. It was the balsam that healed her sick soul.

"My mind is so perturbed that I am near madness," she told one of her friends. "My unhappiness, these endless pains, have almost stupefied me and robbed me of the power of thought," she writes at another time. And so it rings in endless painful variations through all her letters, that insatiable, demanding, never-resting longing for love.

D'Alembert must have been extraordinarily ignorant of human nature never to have suspected the origin of the constant irritation in which his friend lived and from which he was himself the greatest sufferer. He was inconsolable later, when after her death a manuscript fell into his hands which disclosed the truth of Julie's love for the Spanish marquis, Mora, and so brought to the unhappy scholar the knowledge that for eight years he had been deceived. But his naïveté went still further, for he sought a friend for consolation in his pain, choosing that very Count Guibert who had been Mora's successor.

Guibert was a man of the world, who had followed the Duc de Richelieu in the favor of the ladies. Julie met him for the first time in 1772, and he made so deep an impression on her that her romantic love for the young Spaniard, who was lying sick in his rooms below, was overcome by this attraction. With an impulse that was akin to madness, she threw herself into this passion, which the count but coolly returned. This heightened her nervous state; she thought she was not loved and yet felt herself drawn as by sorcery to her lover. At the same time, the shadow of the young Spaniard, who had succumbed to his sickness, fell across her infatuation for Guibert and awakened in her a horrible remorse which she tried to still with opium. Her

last years were a martyrdom, which she herself with a certain satisfaction analyzed.

"I love all the pain I endure through you a thousand times better than all the joys in the world that do not come from you," she confessed once to Guibert. "Yes, go—" she writes another time. "Tell me you love another. I want to hear it. I will hear it. My pain is so great, so heartrending that the only cure is death. What you give me acts like opium on me. It deadens my pain but does not heal it. On the contrary, I grow weaker and more sensitive." And in the last letter which she wrote to Guibert she makes a résumé of their love and says: "There was a time when to be loved by you would have left me nothing more to wish for. Such love might have stilled my remorse. At least it would have changed its bitterness into rapture. Then I might have lived. Now I only wish to die. I have found no consolation for what I have lost. I should not have outlived Mora." She ends with these words: "Farewell, my dear friend. If it were given me to live my life again, I would again dedicate it to love of you. But it is over." On the twenty-third of May, 1776, death released her from her sufferings.

Johann Heinrich Merck, writing of Julie de Lespinasse, says: "It is an unhappy gift of God to have too sensitive a heart." The Lespinasse was a child of the Werther period, though cradled in the rococo. She had too sensitive a heart for the ordeal of living. This singles her out from her contemporaries; she was born before her time. Her love letters to Guibert read like the romance of a female Werther. None of her contemporaries felt like that, and none of

them wore rings of hair on their fingers and hearts of hair on their watch-chains. She was called the Muse of the Encyclopedia, but this title does not exhaust her qualities. She was the first woman of the rococo age to live by the heart more than the head, the forerunner of a new humanity.

“I have no love for half-truths, doubts, and triflings. I do not understand the children of this world; they seem happy, yet they yawn; they have enemies, yet they love one another. It seems so sad to me. Indeed, to me the pain that saps my life is sweeter than the pleasures on which yours drifts.”

These words from a letter to Guibert reveal Julie clearly. They might stand as the motto of her life.

Goethe and the Circle of Noble Souls

ABOUT 1770 a somewhat unusual circle of friends was in the habit of meeting in Darmstadt, all suffering from the "unhappy gift of too sensitive a heart." Among them were three ladies who formed a close union of souls. They were Karoline Flachsland, Luise von Ziegler and Henriette von Roussillon, or, to give them the names their romantic minds preferred, Psyche, Lila, and Urania.

Psyche lived with her brother-in-law, Counselor Hesse, and fate had chosen her for Herder's bride. She was not beautiful, but a fresh-faced, lively girl, always ready for a share in any pastime, but when she wrote letters, or read sentimental books, or rhapsodized with her companions, she changed into another being. She rose to heights of extravagant ecstasy, intoxicating herself with the sound of her own words, as if bent on becoming all spirit and sensibility.

Lila was usually in Hamburg, where she was maid of honor to the landgrave's daughter; she was beautiful and very much admired. Even more emotional than Psyche, her ecstasies knew no limits and embraced the whole animal kingdom. For a time she took a white lamb to her heart and let it eat and drink with her; then she took a dog; without some such object of devotion this hysterically sentimental girl could not live.

The third member of the circle, Urania, was attached to the court of the Duchess of the Zweibrücken Palatinate, who lived in Darmstadt. Sentiment with her took a melancholy form, owing to her delicate health. In friendship she found consolation for much that life had denied her.

All three of them agreed admirably. They took walks, dedicated to enthusiastic worship of nature. Arm in arm they wandered through the environs of Darmstadt, or rocked in a little boat on the water, reveling in the overflowing sensibility of their hearts, sometimes lost in thought of the past, or mentally embracing their soul's desire, under pretense of renunciation.. Or they would go to Merck's house together, where there were often eccentric scenes, as a letter from Psyche tells us. When Gleim, the most sensitive of souls except perhaps Jacobi, once called there, they surrounded him before he had fairly crossed the threshold and Merck himself, Leuchsenring, the apostle of sentiment, and Psyche, drew him down into a corner of the window and overwhelmed the gentle old man with tokens of their affection.

"If you had but seen the dear old fellow's face!" Psyche writes to Herder. "He wept with joy, and as for me—I laid my head on Merck's shoulder. He was deeply moved too and mingled his tears with mine, and—Oh, I can't tell you all! Oh, sweetest tears of my life! To weep in the arms of a friend! Sweetest, truest friend, you know you were there with me, do you not?"

On another occasion a whole company of these sensitive souls made a night pilgrimage through the woods. Merck had his arm round Psyche and poured out enthusiastic adoration of the moonlight with her. They found some glowworms, and Psyche laid them on her hair and expressed her amazement that they lay so quietly, couple by couple, and that they lived and died together!

But these were only exceptional moments in Merck's

life; he looked on the matter as a sort of game and sometimes ventured to laugh at the wave of sensibility. "We swim in sentiment and look down on all who would occupy themselves with practical affairs," he says on one occasion. "Each carries the image of the Ideal about with him as if it were a pocket mirror, and from time to time he views his own character by the light of this ideal, apportioning to himself in the process such measure of content as he thinks fit."

From this time onward Merck played a double part: sometimes behaving as if he belonged to the circle, mystic, full of delirious rapture over everything which speaks to the heart; and then changing to play the knave, satirizing all this exaggeration of feeling, taking a Mephistophelian delight in provoking confusion and quarrels. The threads which linked soul to soul often lay in his hands; and he could tie them more tightly or break them asunder as he pleased. If it had not been for him, the affairs of the Darmstadt circle would not have had so much life and variety.

In the early March of 1772 Merck brought another member to enter the circle of his sentimental friends. This was a young lawyer from Frankfort whose appearance was well calculated to awaken the sympathies of the young women. He was of medium height and slim, with a long, rather pale face, a clearly cut, slightly arched nose, and large, dark brown, gleaming eyes. He showed himself to be an amusing talker, able to tell of various interesting experiences. The ladies took him for a good-hearted, cheerful

creature, "no pedantry about him," and they were delighted to see how he played with Merck's children. By the next afternoon they were on intimate terms, "not sentimental, but cheerful." A walk was arranged, and when they returned, the young lawyer danced a minuet with Psyche and recited Herder's translation of the old Scottish ballad:

Why dois your blade sae drap wi' bluid,
Edward! Edward!

Some weeks later the young doctor of laws again appeared in Darmstadt; he seemed to have enjoyed himself or surely he would not have come back so soon. The spring was in full bloom by now, and burgeoning nature awoke in those noble souls inspirations which they shared with the new friend from Frankfort. Every day he went a fresh pilgrimage to the woods with the girls, amusing them in the most delightful way; sometimes he read poems aloud; sometimes he moved their sympathy by the recital of his unhappy love affairs; sometimes he wrote verses to them or enjoyed a soulful embrace. And afterwards, in Merck's hospitable house or at the counselor's, punch awaited the wanderers.

Here sentiment gave way to joviality and the charm of intimate society made itself felt. The young man from Frankfort showed himself to have many talents, which scarcely belonged to a lawyer, and he seemed to wish to be an artist. He was always overflowing with poems and delighted everybody by reading not only his own but other authors'. And one day he dragged from his pocket a bulky

manuscript, and read aloud some dramatic scenes that kept his audience in breathless suspense; reading them with so much temperament and life that all were carried away. Psyche, who never failed to tell her Herder everything that happened in the Darmstadt circle, related this to him:

"He read us some of the best scenes from his 'Gottfried von Berlichingen,' which no doubt you had from him."

After this, "Junker Berlichingen," the nickname given to Dr. Johann Wolfgang Goethe by the Wetzlar Round Table, often came to Darmstadt on a visit. He lived, as he himself tells us in "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*," on the road—going about like a messenger between the hills and the lowland. He was almost always going about, except for the short time of his stay in Wetzlar, and wherever he went he was on confidential terms. Sometimes one would meet him in Homburg, with the Elysian Ziegler girl, when she was not detained at the Hessian palace, sometimes in Ehrenbreitstein with "Mama La Roche," Wieland's erst-while "Doris"—at whose house the sentimental congress often met, when Leuchsenring would press secret letters into the hands of the listeners—and sometimes in Darmstadt, as associate and confidant of the Noble Souls.

The house of Psyche's brother-in-law offered hospitable welcome, and music found its place here. There were concerts under the direction of the old court musician Enderle, now pensioned off. The lack of skill of his assistants caused things sometimes to go as they should not. When the master of the house expressed dissatisfaction Enderle would reply sharply:

"I play correctly. If the others don't, I cannot help it!"

The guests would sometimes play a trio or quartet. "We hear and feel music together," writes Psyche to her Herder. "I love it so and I feel so moved by my favorite pieces that there is no sweeter illusion in the world!"

She was musical and had a fine voice. She sang Alsatian folk-songs in duet with her sister, for the entertainment of the guests, while her brother-in-law accompanied them on the spinet.

Sometimes they played trisett or a game of forfeits, when kisses were, of course, the favorite penalty. Junker Berlichingen had been to a good school at Sesenheim for this sort of thing. He exchanged friendly kisses with the Noble Souls with all his heart, his overflowing feelings rushing into verse:

And I tremble—come near—
Gazing—sighing—quiv'ring—
Happiness! Happiness!
The feeling of a kiss!

There were games of question and answer at which Goethe shone. His extempore verses always have a touch of feeling. He brought the right note of merriment into the circle. Something was lacking when he left. To remind the "good-hearted wanderer" of his unfilled place in Darmstadt, the Noble Souls sent him a box full of all kinds of gifts, among them perhaps a papier-maché doll, that, though deceived by Kathie's pretty empty-headedness, he should still have something to love.

The box was accompanied by a round robin, full of fun, though expressing longing to see their dear confidant again. He replied with a poem entitled bombastically: "Concerto

dramatico. Composto del Sign. Dottore Flamminio, detto Panurgo secondo. Performed by the Darmstadt Co. of Saints."

A mixture of sense and nonsense, the poem seems by its changing rhythms to characterize the three girls; an *Andantino* for Urania, a *Lamentabile* for Psyche and an *Allergo con spirito* for Lila. The *Presto fugato* with which the poem ends may be taken to signify the amusement which the Jurker Berlichingen used to bring to the company.

But the real literary salon flourished at Merck's house. The character of this man of distinguished mind held the more intellectual of the circle together. He corresponded with many scholars and artists and when they came to Darmstadt invited them to his house. Klopstock, Wieland, Gleim, Sophie La Roche and many others were among his guests. Mama La Roche, or the "Sternheim" as she was called after her own story, was somewhat of a disappointment to the sentimentalists. They expected her to be the living image of her own *Fräulein Sternheim*, an "ideal woman, gentle, tender, doing good deeds, proud, virtuous, and betrayed!" They were astounded when they saw a lady with French manners and the allure of a *mondaine*, a delightful guest, leading the talk so wittily that the poor Noble Souls could only sit and listen. But later when they found that this "mother of the daughters of Germany," as she was called because of her monthly paper for young girls, could be sentimental enough when occasion served, they made her one of themselves.

Merck found her to his taste. She shared his liking for



Goethe Reclining in an Italian Landscape
From a painting by Tischbein

good talk, and he saw in her the ideal which his other friends did not offer, though he was glad to amuse himself with them. In later years, when the friends were all separated, he thought with pleasure of the society that used to meet at his house and wrote—probably to Lila:

“You have a small circle of friends in sympathy with you. Who wants more? Eight or nine people, such as were often in my house in 1772, are a rare spectacle. The thought of pleasures we have had in the past should make us thankful and not discontented.”

The Darmstadt days did not last long. With the spring of 1773 the circle of the sentimentalists was over. The threads which linked the Noble Souls broke as suddenly as if they had been cut. So quickly it happened that Junker Berlichingen was driven to despair at the thought.

“My wretched life has become an arid rock,” he writes on the twenty-first of April to Kestner, “for all have gone. Merck with the court to Berlin, his wife to Switzerland, my sister, the Flachsland girl, you, everyone. I am alone. If I don’t find a woman or hang myself, you may say I don’t know how to enjoy life, or anything else you please that does me honor.”

But Goethe did not need to hang himself, for he was the first to find consolation. Maxe’s black eyes soon led him to cease to think of Psyche, Lila, and Urania, and the charm of those days in Darmstadt. But he did not forget them entirely, for when an old man, he wrote of them in gratitude:

“How greatly that circle inspired and spurred me on cannot be put into words.”

Dreams in the Wittums Palace

IT does not look like a royal palace, that homely, ochre-yellow, two-storied building, squeezed into a corner of the square from which it looks shyly at the imposingly up-to-date Temple of the Arts, where Rietschel's Dioscuri of Weimar keep proud guard. One would not think that those unpretentious walls once enclosed Anna Amélie's intimate kingdom. The entrance is unaccommodating, as if it led to a convent, and only the charming rococo urns on the two wings of the door in the courtyard show something of the grace which hovered over the inner rooms.

We mount with curiosity the broad wooden stair which leads to the floor above. A few seconds and we find ourselves in a little room with walls hung with red silk and a glittering glass luster suspended from the ceiling, in which a number of unneeded lights are ceremoniously displayed. One's glance passes quickly to the white-paneled doors, the red rococo seats, and slender porcelain candlesticks, along the suite of rooms. Is no one coming to give us a friendly welcome? But except for old Knebel enthroned on a marble pedestal in a corner, who looks as serious as if he were studying Homer, and the lovable chamberlain von Einsiedel, who ushers in the arrivals in dress uniform, no one appears to receive us. Has the old fellow forgotten to announce us? Or is he thinking of a poem to repeat to the duchess on the next festive evening? Let us hope he will not forget it as he did on Duchess Luise's birthday, when, an Apollo clad in white satin, with black eyebrows and flowing flaxen locks, he should have presented an address

of homage printed on a sheet of silk. But we will not disturb him; if he will not perform his office, we must find the way to Anna Amélie's apartments ourselves.

We enter the next rooms, small, unassuming, betraying the artistic hand which gives them that air of plain but gracious comfort. No ostentation, no display of *objets de vertu*, spoil their harmony. Every piece is chosen with taste, every mahogany table and chair, every light, every porcelain figure. And from the walls we are greeted by old friends, all those who are near the duchess and compose her household. They look down rather stiffly, weary and aged—the years have not passed unnoticed over their heads—but memory laughs from their eyes and it seems as if they only awaited the magic word which would call them back to life—the bustling life of their day.

And while we are still dreaming, thinking we see Wieland, meager, the skull cap on his high forehead, striding toward us, while haggard Schiller, one arm on the table, reads with his Swabian accent a philosophical thema, and Herder, portly but disapproving, makes discontented faces, and Goethe, with the sober dignity of a counselor, listens attentively, leaning on the window-sill—we are bidden to enter a friendly-looking room, whose pale green coloring is wonderfully restful to our eyes after the red, white and gold of the outer apartment. Gold-toned stripes and rosettes decorate the walls, on which are five Italian sketches by Hackert; a chandelier with four branches is hanging from the ceiling; and furniture with green silk covers is dark against the white wood dado of the walls. A table with nicknacks on it suits the furniture, and in a

corner on a round marble pedestal is the bust of "old Fritz."

But in fancy we see far more. We see, not far from the window, a dainty little person sitting, stroking a spaniel on her lap. There is a delicious laziness about her. She pushes her small feet coquettishly forward, feet that one might place as bibelots on the table. She is in lively conversation with the deformed lady who stands by her, speaking eagerly. She must be saying something amusing, for the muslin cap of the listener nods now and then with delight. We know that talkative dwarf. She can be none but "Thusnelda," the lively Göchhausen, who so charmingly covers the awkwardness of her appearance with her humor and shrewdness. Bashfully we wait until the hunchbacked lady gives us a signal to come nearer. We do not need a second invitation. And as we kneel down to kiss the beautiful hand of the lady with the little dog, two large blue eyes meet ours and a kind smile softens the somewhat masculine features, the sharply jutting "Brunswick nose." A crowd of questions are put to us, all in a friendly tone, questions as to our family, our business, our love affairs. The lady-in-waiting interjects some joking remarks and so half an hour soon passes and we take our leave. But we go with the pleasant satisfaction of having made Anna Amélie's acquaintance and the resolve to visit the apartment again as often as her Highness allows.

One afternoon sees us a silent spectator of a busy company assembled round a square table, heaped with drawing materials, paint-boxes, casts, and books. There sits Anna Amélie, the usual muslin cap on her lightly powdered

hair, guiding a pencil in her little fingers. She does not seem to have control of it as yet, but one can see the zealous effort she is making. If she needs advice she has not far to look for it, for Johann Heinrich Meyer is near her and, leaning on the back of the chair, he follows with watchful eyes what the brushes or pencils of the various ladies are doing. Sometimes he seizes a volume or sketch-book from the chair, to eke out his criticism by example.

Goethe, who is sitting next him and of whom we can see only the back and powdered hair, helps him as best he can, reading aloud a chapter from Winckelmann for the benefit of the whole company, or telling of his own experiences of art in Italy. No one listens more attentively than the bright-faced girl sitting near the duchess. Her high hat with its wreath of flowers suits her well, and she laughs heartily at all the jokes of the "silly counselor."

She is Henriette von Wolfskeel, Thusnelda's young colleague and assistant. We think of her as "a bird who sits on a twig and pipes his song," as Sophie von Schardt put it, "yet she is no nightingale—rather a little twitterer than a songster." And while everyone makes some comment on Goethe's reading, the portly Einsiedel is thinking of the wager which he had with the painter Bury and others in the garden of the villa Malta, on which occasion, to the delight of the spectators, he sprang into the fountain instead of over it.

On the other side of the table Herder's bullet head is seen. He does not remember his own Italian wanderings with any pleasure, but when the talk turns on art he puts in an authoritative word, feeling himself a man of superior-

ity among inferiors. If anyone is praised he instantly interrupts with blame, for he cannot bear to hear another praised. Thusnelda sympathizes with him in this respect, for she is one of those who like to let their tongues wag maliciously; but this is forgiven her because she has such an active brain and is such good company. She does not draw, but is busy with filet lacework. So is her neighbor, whose back is turned to us.

It is Emilie, the youngest and prettiest daughter of the Englishman, Gore, who, having come to Weimar for a short visit, has made his home there since 1791. He sits to the left of the duchess, turning the leaves of a book. He feels happy in this company of men of renown and well-bred women, for here he sees the dream of his life come true. And they respect this man who shut up his business to indulge his longing for culture, because of the honesty of his character, his experience of the world, and real knowledge; they are glad to have him among them and enjoy the society of his two beautiful daughters. Emilie must be very highly thought of, for when the duke casts an eye in her direction, his wife, usually strongly disapproving, merely says that this time his choice really does him credit.

On Monday art is displaced by literature in Anna Amélie's salon. All who belong to the court of the dowager duchess are to be found there and others too; authors traveling through the town, friends of Goethe's who come to discuss things with him or to enjoy the favor of their old friend. Someone experienced in the art of elocution reads aloud. For a time it is Frau von Berlepsch, who has a passion for Jean Paul. She fills the post with taste and

discrimination and reads Shakespeare, Lessing's "Nathan" and "Emilie Galotti," Goethe's "Iphigenie" and "Tasso," and little things by Wieland, the last with such talent that the listeners see them in a new light. The ladies sit round and make lace filets or knit. The gold bobbin flies through their accustomed fingers, which are now outstretched, now cramped, now prettily entwined. Others unravel gold thread, a fashion which has been imported from France and is so popular that a man with epaulets or gold braid dare scarcely appear in a salon for fear of being seized by the workers and having his ornaments torn off. In the pauses of the reading the snuff-boxes are brought out and ringed fingers carry the brown powder to the nose with coquettish grace.

Wednesday is the day for intellectual guests; a marked favor is accorded to them—they are invited to Anna Amélie's table. Mere nobility is almost barred at these dinners; one sees instead Wieland, Goethe, Herder, Schiller, Knebel, and anyone else who represents the arts. There are hot, wordy battles, for most of them have a grudge against some or all of the others; Herder against Schiller, Goethe against Wieland, Wieland against Herder. There are moments when Herder, through his arrogance, stirs the gall of the poet of Oberon, who will let his feelings have expression when he gets home:

"No one is more ready than I, at all times, to understand how small I am compared to every really fine fellow, but I cannot bear it when a man is so proud of his own work! And when a fellow like that is always being malicious about other fellows, then I wish there were a dozen Pyrenees between myself and that fellow."

But Wieland will sometimes let his own humor run and, joining forces with Herder, will be sarcastic about Goethe's theatrical and masquerade arrangements, the combatants exchanging witticisms of some sharpness. The heavy wine, which Einsiedel served liberally, heated their brains so that Anna Amélie sometimes had to interfere or the table break up early. On such occasions she was the guardian of good breeding and sometimes the adjudicator of differences, leading the talk again to quieter paths. At these affairs, when she showed her full talent, she revealed a personality that Goethe undoubtedly had in mind when he described the Princess Leonora in "Tasso":

I can rejoice, when clever men are speaking,
That I can understand what they are saying,
Whether it be a judgment of a man
Of ancient times, the value of his deeds,
Or whether science be the point at issue,
And wisdom which experience confirms,
Both to assist and to uplift mankind.
Whatever they may speak of, those fine brains,
I follow easily, being quick to follow.
I love to hear the strife of noble minds,
When power and passion, in their manly breasts,
So friendly and so fearfully in tumult,
In gracious speech pours from their eloquent lips.
I love to hear these men of intellect
Lay bare the true cost of a prince's thirst
For fame and its outspreading realms, revealing
With their fine art a talent that instructs,
When used unkindly it might overwhelm.

The third of the arts is not neglected in Anna Amélie's salon. A small room, decorated in gray-green, is dedicated

to music, and kept in half-darkness. On the piano Grave accompanies the youthful Henriette von Egloffstein. The duchess listens, leaning back in her chair, absorbed in the touching song, and when it is finished she draws the little singer to her and overwhelms her with caresses and praise. When she is alone, the duchess improvises cheerful little melodies that seem to come from the past days of the rococo, telling of Watteau's blooming Arcadia, revealing her constant remembrance of the sheep-filled meadows that to her are always home.

Even in the attics the gay spirit of the Wittums Palace can be found, for here Thusnelda has her salon. On every Sunday morning a small circle of ladies come to her. Often Heinrich Meyer will come and tell delightful tales in his Zurich accent. Leo von Seckendorff, Goethe, and even old Wieland sometimes join.

A pleasure not to be underrated is Thusnelda's coffee, and the "bread of friendship," for which she is famous throughout the town. The guests themselves have to provide the rest of the entertainment, one a poem, another a composition, a third an amusing story. When the company are not too many they will read a play, each taking a part, or will discuss some literary question, as, for instance, what Schiller exactly meant by his "Mädchen aus der Fremde." Here, too, the final arrangements will be made for a birthday celebration, when a play is to be given. The poet—Goethe of course—will dictate the rôles to little Göchhausen, while he walks up and down the room and sips at a glass of punch. The others then have to memorize their parts and rehearse them. No pouting, all must do as

they are told. And under the rule of this stern manager, three mornings will see the work well on its way.

At one of these morning coffee-drinkings, when several ladies are assembled in the attic, Goethe suddenly appears. He is in an exceptionally good temper, overflowing with kindness, talking of a hundred things, scoffing at formal company manners, their hypocrisy and tediousness, and suddenly he brings out a proposition, which at first arouses astonishment, but soon receives general approval. They are to found a society for closer companionship, on the lines of the old custom of the Minnesingers—a *cour d'amour*. He chooses as his partner Henriette von Egloffstein, and she accepts him; the others soon make their choice—even the Göchhausen finds her Seladon in Heinrich Meyer.

On the next Wednesday seven pairs of lovers appear at the theater in Goethe's home; Goethe with Henriette, Schiller with Frau von Wolzogen, Herr von Wolzogen with Lotte Schiller, Meyer with Thusnelda, and so on. The court of love is declared in being. The ladies are to provide the food, the gentlemen the drink. All feel in the right mood and congratulate themselves on the idea, which their friend, fifty years of age, has suggested. But unrestrained hilarity such as used to rule in Weimar will not come back. Goethe himself, with little pedantries and formalities, perhaps unconsciously makes them feel constrained. Instead of charming causeries which used to be the manner of some twenty years before, they make clever speeches; and instead of mischievous sallies sentimental gallantries come to their lips. The court of love becomes a parody of itself.

The last remnants of sentimentality are used up; no longer does soul link to soul in bonds of sensibility—at least, not in this company. They part, disillusioned; the court of love is closed almost as soon as opened. Only Schiller remains, for he is held by other bonds than those of sentiment. It is his friend who holds him, in whose universe of thought his own world finds its orbit.

PART V

Romance and Common Sense



THERE is an engraving by Dequevauvilliers from a picture by Lavreince called "Assemblée au salon," showing a great, square room with wide windows reaching from ceiling to floor, framed in heavy hangings, which, however, do not prevent the light from flooding parquetry floor, walls, mirrors, and furniture. There is the charm of the rococo in the Cupids on the ceiling and the moldings over the door, in the lusters and candelabra, the mirrors and tables, and—by no means least—in the group assembled there. Yet, in spite of the brightness and grace of the surroundings, the room strikes one as austere and cold. A thoughtful gravity seems to have supplanted the joyous spirit that should imbue these hangings, Cupids, and parquetry, and a weariness, heavy with dreams, seems to weigh down the eyes of these ladies and gentlemen. Gone is the careless gaiety that used to reign here, and tedium is installed. Harmonious intercourse seems broken, and the guests form into groups, to pursue separate interests. A lady with a feathered head, à la Marie Antoinette, is sitting in the window deep in a book; perhaps it is Rousseau's "Contrat Social" which is absorbing her attention. Near her, an abbé plays at dice with a fair partner, just to pass the time. Half hidden by a screen near the fireplace a young couple are talking; she seems to be reproaching him and, protesting his innocence, he lays his hand on his heart. Near them a group is playing ombre busily but dully. And two dogs at play occupy the center of the picture.

Where were the people of talent who used to provide the entertainment, and were themselves the center of in-

terest? They were not here, and with them had gone the spirit that united them in a common enjoyment. D'Alembert was dead; he outlived his friend Julie de Lespinasse only some seven years. Galiani lay under the sod in Naples; Madame Geoffrin had long passed away; Diderot and Turgot were dead; even the Marquise du Deffand, who seemed never to expect to die, ended her life at the age of eighty-three. Who had taken their place? Where were to be found people who, like them, could keep a party of thirty or forty amused with their *esprit*, their enthusiasm, their talent? These who remained possessed very inferior talent—or none at all. Beaumarchais celebrated his triumphs at the theater, André Chénier, the hope of French poetry, loved solitude or at most a few intimate friends. Mirabeau was the only hero of these days and that indicated the way the wind was blowing.

If one wishes to see the significance of these heavily-oppressed evenings that preceded the revolution one must go to Madame Necker's salon. One knows the motive that led this tall, blonde, pastor's daughter, brought up in the loneliness of a village, and yet able to write letters in the Ciceronian style, to found a salon. It was not for the reasons that inspired the salons of the eighteenth century—the ambition to play a leading part in Parisian society—but unselfish love for her husband, love which approached worship. She herself was lacking in the gifts that were essential to a French salon. Neither in speech nor in manner had she the tone of the great world. She dressed tastelessly, there was no grace in her carriage, and she posed too visibly.

"All was premeditated," was Marmontel's opinion. "Nothing flowed spontaneously or created that illusion. It was not for us or for herself that she was taking trouble, it was for her husband, who left it to his wife to see that the conversation was entertaining."

Galiani speaks of her "cold assumption of good manners," and Morellet censures her severity, which checked the free expression of thought. Under such circumstances literature found little encouragement in her salon. Madame Necker herself liked to talk of literary things, but she did not do so with the necessary verve. And as her husband thought she ranked philosophers and authors far too highly, she may have sacrificed in his interests, willingly, as she always did, her real literary inclinations. Her salon can make no literary claim. When Madame Necker wanted to give her guests an exceptional treat, she invited Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to read his masterpiece, "Paul and Virginia," to her circle; but Buffon went to sleep during the reading, and the women quickly hid the tears that Virginia's fate wrung from them. The reason for the Necker salon was political, and as soon as Madame Necker saw her husband made director-general of French finances her salon had achieved its purpose. That it still remained a meeting-place for cultured people was due less to Madame Necker than to her daughter, who now took the lead.

Anne Louise Germaine developed early. The constant presence of so many clever men in her parents' house helped to ripen her talents before their time. When she was still a little girl she was as charming with the guests as if

she had been grown up. She usually sat near her mother's chair on a little wooden stool, very quiet, saying nothing, but lending an attentive ear to everything. Marmontel, Grimm, the Abbé Raynal loved to take notice of her. She was led to talk, and was asked what she had read; they brought her books and awakened her mind in many ways. When she was twelve she wrote a comedy, and according to Grimm it was not only extraordinary for her age, but above any of the same kind of work that had served him as an example. When fifteen she was editing legal and political treatises, no matter how deep the subjects; her lectures on Montesquieu's "*De l'Esprit des Lois*" show that she had her own point of view. Her social instincts also developed, and so she came to take her mother's place. Even after she made a marriage of convenience with the Swedish ambassador, Eric Magnus, Baron de Staël-Holstein, and had a salon of her own, she often went to the rue Bergère to receive the guests there in place of her ailing mother.

When the terrible days of the revolution dawned, Necker took leave of his ministerial duties and withdrew to Coppet with his wife. Madame Necker's salon ceased to exist, as did so many others, fear of the revolution closing their doors. Madame de Staël's house was the only salon left in Paris. There the breath of the revolution blew, for Germaine enthusiastically upheld the cause of liberty and hoped the change of government would mean the salvation of France. Her house became the arena for political plans and intrigues, which ended in her banishment from Paris in 1792 by the Committee of Public Safety.

After the Ninth Thermidor Madame de Staël returned, and, as before, her house became the meeting-place for clever men. But they were new faces as a rule: Benjamin Constant, the author of "Adolphe"; the dramatist Marie Joseph Chénier—of whose play, "Charles IX," Danton said that it would kill royalty, as "Figaro" had killed the peerage; Louvret de Couvray, author of "The Chevalier de Faublas," Roederer, Daunou, and many others. But the air had changed. The republican Constant was sometimes bewildered by the many different opinions voiced in that salon.

"If I talk to the victorious republican party," he writes, "I hear that we must cut off the heads of the anarchists and shoot down the émigrés. If I approach the small group of secret Terrorists who have survived the Terror, I am told that the new government, the émigrés, and foreigners must be destroyed. If I then give way to the deceptive charm of the moderate party, whose writers demand a return to law and order, I hear that France cannot do without a king, which perturbs me not a little. With my republican ardor, I do not know what to do."

Yet another influence, which Constant does not mention, was to be found in Madame de Staël's salon—displeasure at the growing power of Napoleon. At first she looked on him as a hero, comparing him to Scipio and Tancred. But when she met him personally her dream was shattered. Napoleon took no notice of her! Took no notice of the famous writer and political leader! That the hero carelessly overlooked her salon from which she believed she ruled the state, that he viewed her activities with

contempt, mortally wounded her vanity and caused an unquenchable hatred of the "tyrant" to burn within her. Nothing less would content her than to overthrow the first consul.

Napoleon was too quick for her. When his patience with her malicious attacks, which she openly paraded, came to an end, he banished her from Paris with the command never again to return. But the rash woman, who now set out to travel over Europe, did return now and again to Paris, to spin intrigues and be again banished.

The ground for her hatred of Napoleon is to be found in her romantic nature. Her eagerness for freedom and her active spirit could find no satisfaction in the stringently defined, classic lines of Napoleon's statecraft. She herself belonged to the literary phrase-makers of the romantic school; the school that took its inspiration not from Medieval Christianity but from foreign lands. Even in her first poetic works, love scenes take place in primeval forests or cypress-shaded parks; the wild is their background and their imagery exotic. She assimilates with the two most famous French romantics, Chateaubriand and Constant. And when she became friends with August Wilhelm Schlegel she was the point at which French and German romanticism met. It was she who first made her fellow countrymen acquainted with German intellectual life, the life that had taken on so many forms and which Goethe was unconsciously ruling from Weimar.

The Grecian Supper

THE importance attached to a supper by society in the eighteenth century was so great that even a clever woman like Madame du Deffand called it "one of the four chief things." The food was sumptuous and the novelties devised were manifold. The Maréchale de Luxembourg thought that women were not sufficiently entertaining and arranged suppers for men, she herself the sole representative of her sex. In opposition to this, the Comtesse de Custine organized suppers at which only women were present.

Surprises were sprung which were not always amusing. It is told that the Duchesse de Mazarin gave a supper to sixty people at which a great pasty was placed in the center of the table. On a sign from the duchess this was opened, and out flew a hundred birds. But these caught in the carefully arranged head-dresses of the ladies, and naturally there was an outcry. They could not easily release the birds and had to rise from the table, denouncing the foolish jest.

Such matters often formed a subject of conversation for days in Paris and even elsewhere. The greatest excitement was caused by a Grecian Supper, about which the most extraordinary rumors went round. In Versailles the king was incensed at the expense involved, estimating the cost at twenty thousand francs; in Rome they spoke of forty thousand, in Vienna the sum amounted to sixty thousand, and in St. Petersburg it rose to eighty thousand! In reality this supper in the antique style cost fifteen francs.

The hostess was the talented painter, Madame Vigée-Lebrun. Everyone knows her portrait of herself, now hanging in the Louvre, reproductions of which have gone all over the world. It shows her in all her charm as a young mother, with her little daughter pressed lovingly to her breast. It is a face that would touch the coldest heart; and this she did by both her beauty and her talent. She took the place of Rosalba Carriera, who was the portrait painter of society in the days of the regent. A stream of carriages rolled to her door in the rue de Cléry. There were some days when she gave three sittings in her atelier, days which were crowded with work, leaving no leisure for other occupations except music, which she loved next to painting. Only on Sundays she opened her studio to visitors for two hours, and now and then she gave evenings when the musical world of Paris met in her modest rooms.

Madame Lebrun lived in a wealthy quarter, but she had only a small anteroom and a bedroom. The first, which was very quietly furnished, served as her salon. Here she received marquises and maréchaux, artists and scholars, in fact all that Paris possessed of talent and mind. The guests were often so numerous that many of them had to sit on the floor for lack of chairs. But nobody minded; the enjoyment was great, discomfort did not matter. Famous composers like Grétry and Sacchini played fragments of their operas; Garat, whose voice could surmount any difficulty, sang Gluck so wonderfully that not only Gluck's adherents but all joined in enthusiastic applause. There was sometimes a contest between Gluckites and Piccinists, as the lovers of Gluck and Piccini were called, and this would

be so fierce that serious quarrels, even duels, might be the result. The violinist Viotti played chamber music exquisitely, and Madame de Montgeron accompanied him. Many others known in those days, one could meet in Madame Lebrun's salon—painters like Maëstrino, Jarnovick, Asvédo. They all brought their best, proud of the chance to meet this distinguished company.

Favorite guests, like the Abbé Delille, the poet Lebrun, the Chevalier de Boufflers, the Vicomte de Ségur, Madame Lebrun would invite to supper. These evening meals were among the most amusing in Paris. Many clever people sat down together, and the intimacy that existed between most of them banished stiffness and gave scope for gaiety. They never discussed politics, giving more time to literature. But the most amusing talk concerned the news of the day, which some of them had at their tongues' ends and which they recounted with so much humor that the listeners in continuous laughter let time go by unnoticed, until midnight was found to be long past.

All these affairs were cast into the shade by the Grecian Supper. It was an improvisation rather than a carefully prepared idea. One evening when some twelve or fifteen guests had been asked to a small supper, Lebrun was to read a poem. As usual the food had not been given much thought; two dishes of vegetables, an eel, a poulet, and a honeycake baked with currants. On that day it happened that Monsieur Vigée had read out to his sister an account of travels in which a Grecian supper with spices and sauces was described. He said, laughingly:

"You ought to give one like that tonight."

Madame Lebrun instantly set to work with the aid of her cook to prepare the eel and poulet with Grecian sauces, the making of which she understood well enough. She decided that the supper must look in character, so she borrowed Etruscan vases from the Comte de Parois, and laid out Greek costumes for the guests, having these in some number in her wardrobe as a painter. The company entered happily into the joke, dressed themselves up in the classic garments, and drank a flask of Cyprus wine from old Roman bowls. At the head of the table Lebrun presided in a purple cloak, as Pindar. The powder had been shaken from his hair and the curls let free; on his head he wore a laurel wreath. The Marquis de Cubières, in Roman tunic, a gold lyre (made from his guitar) in his arms, delivered a rhapsody. Madame Chalgrin, Madame de Bonneuil, and Madame Vigée seemed true Athenians of amazing beauty, especially Madame Vigée, who had the most wonderful eyes in the world. But Madame Lebrun surpassed them all, for the Greek costume perfectly suited her slim and supple figure. She wore a veil and wreath of flowers in her hair.

No wonder that the Comte de Vaudreuil, who came late, stood in the doorway staring at this transformed company, wondering if he were dreaming, or if he had really walked into a symposium in ancient Hellas. But when Cubières struck his lyre and they all sang Gluck's chorus, "*Le dieu de Paphos et de Gnide*," he awoke from his surprise and joined in, enjoying with his friends Cubières's playing on the lyre and Lebrun's anacreontic odes until late in the night. The count was so greatly amused that he told of the delightful evening all over Paris, and must have added

to its glories or such amazing tales would not have spread about it. In any case, the Grecian Supper was the event of the season and those who did not share in it shed tears of envy, or by exaggerations and spite gave vent to their annoyance. But the Anacreon of the feast flew to defense of their hostess and wrote in flaming indignation:

Fame has its storms that threaten, far and near;
The Envious revengeful grudges bear,
And all that's beautiful and all that shines
Must suffer stings that bear foul Envy's signs.
For no one could deserve a happier fate
Than thou, whom Envy doth torment and hate.
Exquisite portraits thou hast painted, sure,
And Fame herself comes knocking at thy door,
For when the voice of Envy loudest cries
Then Fame is most assured among the Wise.

Though others, too, were prepared to take up the cudgels on Madame Vigée-Lebrun's behalf, it was a danger in those days for anyone to get a reputation for lavish entertainment. Men kept within their own four walls, coming into the open as little as possible, for the people growled in the streets and gazed through the windows at richer folk, drinking a cheerful cup. They saw no difference between salon and brothel, and hated everything that meant pleasure which they could not share. When ladies and gentlemen set out for social affairs they were insulted in the street, the people shaking their fists and crying after them:

"Next year you'll run behind your carriages and we shall drive in them."

Now the attention of the people turned to Madame

Vigée-Lebrun. The rumor of the "twenty-thousand-franc supper" let loose their hatred upon her. When she moved into her new house in the rue du Gros-Chenet in 1789, people threw brimstone through the ventilators into her cellar, and when she showed herself at the window the sansculottes shook their fists at her. Everything was in a turmoil. The National Guard, on which some still set their hope, was composed of such doubtful elements that it was a menace rather than an assurance of safety. Whoever could, packed and fled. In Madame Vigée-Lebrun, too, rose the thought of flight, but on the day on which she meant to start National Guardsmen suddenly appeared in her salon. Most of them were drunk, wore dirty clothes, and had terrifying faces. They told her firmly:

"You shan't go, citizeness; you shan't get away."

After they had blustered about her room for a bit and thrown foul insults at her, they left. Anxious friends advised her to flee, not in her own carriage but by diligence. She got off with her little daughter and the governess on the sixth of October, on the day that the king and queen were taken from Versailles to Paris by the armed mob.

It was a dreadful journey. Traveling with them were a filthy, evil-smelling man, who preened himself on the robberies he had committed and openly declared that he would hang this or that person from the lamp-post, and another who boasted that he was a Jacobin from Grenoble and talked revolutionary propaganda. When people crowded round the doors of the diligence at the various stopping-places, eager to hear the latest news from Paris, he cried in a shrill voice:

“Don’t worry, my children; we’ve got the baker and his wife safe and sound. We’ll dictate a constitution to him, he’ll have to sign it, and then all will be well over.”

Madame Lebrun was relieved of her distasteful companions at Lyons, where she stayed for three days with some friends. Then she hired a carriage and drove straight into Switzerland. She did not breathe freely until she had passed the bridge of Beauvoisin; France now lay behind her, and she was safe. But her thoughts went back to Paris, to those friends, so many of whom had shared her suppers, and who were soon to fall under the guillotine.

Madame Récamier's Salon

AFTER the Ninth Thermidor three women were much talked of in Paris. They were called "the three Graces of the Directoire." They were Josephine Beauharnais, Madame Tallien, and Madame Récamier; but if the son of Priam had had to award one of them the prize for beauty, he would have given it to the last-named. The wonderfully harmonious balance of her slim figure threw even Josephine's classic beauty into the shade, and Madame Tallien's dazzling appearance lost its value beside her less showy but far more exquisite rival. Juliette Récamier's beauty was more charming than dazzling at first sight; but the longer one looked at her the more beautiful she seemed. All her attractions were then esteemed, her lithe, elegant figure, her admirably formed neck, her pearly white skin, her curly chestnut hair, her finely cut, truly French nose, and her virginal aspect—for she was like a Raffael Madonna.

There are really no words to describe her beauty; we have to call on painting to help us. Yet even the art of a David and a Gérard failed to express her. Perhaps she may be more clearly realized when we think of the effect she had on her contemporaries. When she was asked to take the collection one Sunday at the Church of St. Roch, the rumor filled the church to overflowing, and many climbed upon the candelabra and side altars to catch a glimpse of her as she went round the congregation. The collection came to twenty thousand francs. When she appeared in England the public broke into spontaneous homage, the

newspapers wrote long articles on her beauty, and her picture was to be seen in many houses. Indeed it went round the world, for Chamisso declares that he saw a copy among some exports for China.

Before her marriage, while still Juliette Bernard, Madame Récamier had attracted much attention in the social world, for her parents—her father was a receiver-general—lived in considerable style, having their box at the Théâtre Français and giving many receptions at their own house. Here she learned to know her future husband, the banker Jacques-Rose Récamier, an astute man of business, who had made a fortune through lucky speculations during the revolutionary years. He was nearly forty and used to comfort, and he wanted someone to manage his house and act as hostess, though he told a friend that he had a genuine love for Juliette. She was fifteen and had not much time for reflections; she liked her suitor as a child does like the friend of its parents, and gave her consent. Two months later she became his wife.

Madame Récamier fulfilled her husband's requirement as a hostess in a way that left him nothing to desire. Even in her first home in the rue du Mail, there was a good deal of society, but her salon reached full bloom when her husband took the house in the rue du Montblanc from Madame de Staël. This sale brought the two famous women together, and from the passing acquaintance sprang a friendship that lasted twenty years. Through Madame de Staël, Madame Récamier met the literary circle on more intimate terms, and opened her house to it. Soon after, in the time of the Consulate, her salon became a social king-

dom which she ruled, in the words of Sainte-Beuve, "as the most brilliant, most beautiful, and youngest queen of Elegance."

Her big receptions took place on Mondays. On that day there gathered at her house a lively company of authors, painters, philosophers, new-made generals, merchants, parvenus, and foreigners, among them many Englishmen. Young Eugène Beauharnais was to be seen there; he gave Juliette a ring once and begged her to wear it in remembrance of the giver. Lucien Bonaparte also came, and on him Juliette's beauty made such an impression that at first it seemed as if, under her influence, he would give up his evil habits. But the improvement was not lasting. When she received his stormy wooing coldly and he saw that his hopes were groundless, he went back to his usual pleasures..

Napoleon did not frequent Madame Récamier's salon. He met her once at a reception at his brother's house and spoke with some lack of tact about Lucien's affection for her. Moreau, who was planning his conspiracy against Napoleon, was one of her intimate friends. She knew of the plans he was making with Bernadotte and went to hear the case against Moreau, until Napoleon begged her, in the interests of the accused, to stay away. Bernadotte came often to her salon. To her intimate friends must be added the cousins Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency. For Adrien, who was sent into exile like Moreau a little later, she seems to have had a feeling of love, if one may believe Benjamin Constant. Painters were represented by Fleury Richard, a disciple of David, and the

portrait painter Gérard. The world of letters included Constant and Gabriel Legouvé, whose "Le Mérite des Femmes" had had a signal success. Germans who were visiting Paris, as for instance Kotzebue and Johann Friedrich Reichardt, formerly musical director at the court of Frederick the Great, were always welcome to Madame Récamier's salon.

She appeared at these evenings usually dressed à l'*athénienne*, in a plain white satin gown that clung to her figure, her neck and arms bare, her hair gathered up with a broad black velvet ribbon. She wore no jewelry except pearls, for simplicity set off her beauty to its fullest advantage. Her loveliness was her greatest attraction. She knew how to be both courteous and roguish when begging famous authors or actors to amuse her guests, and no one could resist her. The glance of her eyes was an unuttered request, a soft command. When she appeared she fascinated everyone. The guests might be strangers and the conversation, in spite of the efforts of the more intellectual, might not be flowing, but her presence put everybody at ease. She said a friendly word, made one known to another as she passed, and so set conversation going. The art of the lady of the rococo period of juggling with philosophical paradoxes or phrases, she did not possess; but she had sound common sense, unprejudiced power of thought and a right appreciation of everything which was noble and beautiful. When such things were in question she was ready with her opinion.

Madame Récamier entertained in very many ways. She gave concerts at which the best artists in Paris performed,

but nothing afforded her guests greater pleasure than when she danced for them. She danced extremely well; her "Shawl Dance" Madame de Staël has immortalized in "Corinne." The grace of antiquity lived again in her movements, and in her artistic manipulation of the twining shawl, and she triumphed over her audience as, fifty years before, her predecessors had triumphed, those Graces of the rococo age.

When the heat of summer made life unbearable in Paris, Madame Récamier's salon moved to a country château by Clichy-la-Garenne. A new Arcadia blossomed here, the romantic Arcadia of the Empire. Even in the morning the château would be full of guests. When Madame Récamier and her mother returned from mass, she would find Junot, Bernadotte, and Camille Jordan already there. Later would come the Montmorency cousins, General Moreau, the famous actor Talma, and some well-known Englishmen. At the midday meal a lively discussion would be held, touching on politics, art and literature, and war. When there were many Englishmen, they talked of England. They drew comparisons between the British Isles and France and brought out the merits of both nations. After the meal the guests amused themselves; some would continue to converse over a cup of coffee, others seek the cool shade of the park.

Later they assembled again to hear Talma read. He gave them a scene from "Othello" or a soliloquy from "Macbeth," from Ducis's translation, to which they listened with rapt attention. How the times had changed! In Madame Geoffrin's salon no one would have dared to de-

claim Shakespeare; they had reproached Ducis for having chosen so ghastly a subject as "Macbeth" for the stage, although he had greatly moderated the horrors in his version. But the revolution had accustomed them to horrors, and such incidents had begun to creep into literature. After Talma's declamation Madame Récamier sang, accompanying herself on the harp. Then Longchamps read his "Seducteur Amoureux," which he wanted to see produced at the Théâtre Français. Old La Harpe, for whose opinion Longchamps was anxious, was much pleased and delighted the author with compliments. Following this, Madame Récamier danced a graceful gavotte at the instigation of the ballet-master Vestris.

New guests arrived as others left. And so it went on all day long. There was one very unusual guest—a wild man. Not only the romantics but the ladies as well were enthusiastic about this exotic stranger. An Indian, Negro, or mulatto was as indispensable to society in Empire days as an abbé had been to the rococo. This wild man had to take his seat next madame, and became at once the subject of conversation. They all talked about him. While they made remarks about his habits and the curious food he preferred, he seemed to find no enjoyment in his place next so beautiful a neighbor. He waited for a moment when the discussion had become heated and then vanished. After a long search they discovered him, stark naked, at the top of a tree. Only a basket of peaches had power to lure him from his perch. La Harpe said, amused:

"I should like to hear Jean Jacques Rousseau repeat his denunciations of social observances *now*."

When this interesting intermezzo was over, they had fruit and ices. As they were in a Rousseau mood, they then walked to the village. There a wedding was taking place; the guests mixed with the wedding party and shared their amusements. When twilight came they walked home again arm in arm, and found new arrivals at the château: Madame de Staël, the Prussian ambassador, the Marchese Lucchesini, his wife, and some other ladies. The entertainment began all over again; tableaux vivants, the amusement favored in more gallant days, were popular at Clichy. Madame de Staël was stage director, and appeared as Hagar in the desert, with her son for Ishmael and Juliette for the angel. Then Madame Viotte sang one of her own songs.

At eleven they had supper and at midnight the guests went home.

In the February of 1803 Madame Récamier suffered a cruel blow. The government interdicted her Monday receptions. Not long before, Madame de Staël's salon had been closed, and she had gone into exile. The reason for the proceeding against Juliette was obviously because she had so many of Napoleon's enemies among her friends; and her sympathy for Moreau had given the impetus. The loss to Parisian society by the closing of these two salons was considerable. It must have been painful for Juliette, who had now no sphere for her activities. Fate seemed to bear her a grudge, for a few years later her husband's business failed, the great bank of Récamier. The hôtel in the rue du Montblanc was sold, and Juliette had now no-



Madame de Staël
From a painting by Gérard

where in which to hold a salon. But she met the blow with intelligence and energy.

Her friends all tried to help her, and she received an invitation from Madame de Staël to come to Coppet. She did not hesitate to accept and journeyed there in July, 1807. Between these two widely different women—the passionate, enthusiastic, masculine Germaine de Staël and the gentle, womanly Juliette Récamier—an intimate friendship had sprung up, maintained from a distance by means of letters. Benjamin Constant declared that the friendship was due to the feeling one had for her father and the other for her mother, which seems a doubtful explanation. The theosophist Ballanche shows greater insight when he speaks of:

“ . . . the talent of one for original thought, and the quickness of the other to understand; the masculine intellect of one, bringing everything to the light, and the intelligence of the other in appreciating. When one heard them talking one received an impression of power softened by charm, and noble talents, brought out by their association.”

Coppet was an idyllic little place on the Lake of Geneva. When Madame de Staël was away on her travels, it seemed quiet and peaceful, almost deserted, but when she returned it was filled with life, for its owner loved always to have a crowd of authors about her. When Madame Récamier arrived she found several there. Clever August Wilhelm Schlegel, who accompanied Madame de Staël on her travels, and the inseparable Benjamin Constant, who was at work on a translation of Schiller's “Wallenstein.” Constant was not content. He contemplated a break

with Madame de Staël, and could not summon enough strength of will. He took the step next year, secretly marrying a German girl named Charlotte von Hardenberg, without letting "Corinne" know. But even this did not bring about a final breach. Constant still lived more at Coppet with Madame de Staël than with his wife, who went about from one hotel to another.

Constant's state of discontent may explain the harsh judgment he pronounced on Madame Récamier: "She is a bizarre person." Nevertheless he took his part in the amusements at the château and enjoyed playing in the theatricals. They understood how to make time pass in Coppet. Once they produced Racine's "Andromache," in which Madame de Staël played Hermione, Madame Récamier Andromache, and Constant Pyrrhus. Another time Madame de Staël and her children put on a play written by herself, "Geneviève de Brabant." Such amusements filled the leisure hours, when they could not work because inspiration flagged.

One day a distinguished guest came to Coppet—Prince August of Prussia, the nephew of Frederick the Great who was taken prisoner in 1806 at Saalfeld, where his brother fell. Madame Récamier made such an impression on the young prince that after a few weeks he offered her his hand. She herself, remembering the ill luck of the last few years and that fourteen years of married life had not awakened any deep feeling, was inclined to accept the prince's proposal. So one gathers from her willingness to sign a written oath when her lover had to say good-by. This promise was worded as follows:

"I swear on my soul's salvation to keep the feeling which links me to P.A. of P. unsoiled; to do all that honor permits to get my marriage dissolved; to entertain neither love nor affection for any other man; to see him again as soon as possible; and whatever the future may bring, to trust my fate to his love and honor.

I. R."

The oath the prince signed was worded similarly; he undertook to have nothing to do with any other woman so long as there was hope of uniting himself with Juliette. The prince remained true to his oath. He waited a lifetime for the fulfilment of the obligation entered into in Coppet. But Madame Récamier did not keep her word. She lacked the will to do so, whatever her inclination may have been.

Madame Récamier often said that Prince August was the only man who had her full approval. When seventy-four, she thought wistfully of that romantic friendship and told her grandnephew, the author Louis de Loménie:

"As I was convinced that we should marry, our relation was very intimate. But please understand that it was not entirely so."

Then she added:

"The memory of that fortnight and of the first two years here, at the Abbaye, when Monsieur de Chateaubriand loved me, are the happiest—the only happy ones—of my life."

This proves that the Prussian prince did not alone possess Juliette's heart. Another man displaced him—Chateaubriand.

This was in 1819, when Madame Récamier had retired, tired of playing her part in the great world, and when she thought the small rooms of a convent big enough for her guests. She moved to the Abbaye-aux-Bois. Many things had happened since that romantic summer in Coppet; a journey to Italy, new friends, new social triumphs in Rome and Paris. But sad things too. One of the hardest blows was the imperial edict of the tenth of September, 1811, that "Dame Récamier" must remain at a distance of forty miles from Paris. She owed this stern sentence largely to her friendship for Madame de Staël, for whom Napoleon cherished an implacable hatred. It might also have been due to the increasing political significance of her salon, frequented by the chief men of the Empire. The emperor once sarcastically asked:

"Since when does the Council of State meet at Madame Récamier's?"

After the fall of the Corsican, the number of notabilities who again visited her salon proved that in spite of so many years' interruption, it had not lost its power of attraction. In addition to all the old friends, Metternich, Wellington, Canova, and Alexander von Humboldt became her frequent visitors; Chateaubriand read his poems there, and Benjamin Constant, who for years had been on friendly terms with her, suddenly fell passionately in love with her. The flaming effusions which he, a man in the fifties, addressed to his adored, sometimes at the rate of three or four a day, and his autobiographical romance "Adolphe," which he read aloud to her circle with such effect that all eyes filled with tears, are eloquent testimony

of his stormy wooing, which Juliette's rejection only seemed to fan to greater fervor.

And how did Madame de Staël feel about the boyish infatuation of her *ami du cœur*, who had apparently forgotten her for her most intimate friend? The few references we have on this subject indicate complete indifference; the friendship between the two women was too deep for jealousy to disturb. Now and then Juliette received a jesting warning that she must not let Constant absorb her altogether.

Corinne was again in Paris, that Paris from which she had once torn herself with bleeding heart and to which she had returned again and again. But the Paris she now found did not please her; the atmosphere of the Restoration did not suit with her ideas. Even in Madame Récamier's salon a royalist feeling reigned. Many of her old friends, Benjamin Constant among them, belonged to the king's party. The political situation would not have kept her in Paris if it had not been for other things, and among these Juliette.

"They received me with flowers, gifts, and verses," she wrote to her friend from Coppet, where she was spending the summer of 1814, "but my soul is not rustic enough not to miss your salon."

These words show an affection for Juliette which, witnesses tell us, was as great on her side, and even in old age, her thoughts often turned to her friend.

After the death of Corinne, on July 14, 1817, her interest in society waned. Two years later she moved to the Abbaye-aux-Bois. She had two rooms on the third floor

separated by a long dark corridor. In one, in which she slept, there was her piano, harp, and bookcase, a picture of Madame de Staël and various remembrances of happy days at Coppet. This little room was now the meeting-place of her faithful friends. Many old favorites were among them, Mathieu de Montmorency, the dukes of Laval, Doudeville, and la Rochefoucauld, but many new faces too. She made the acquaintance of Ampère, the young critic of whom Goethe thought so highly, and he fell as passionately in love with her as Constant had done and, though only twenty-three, asked her to be his wife. Ampère brought his friend Mérimée with him, who was not inclined to share his friend's enthusiasm and made the sharp criticism:

"I fancy the organ, heart, is entirely lacking in her."

Young Lamartine also came to see her and was more attracted than inflamed, and here the leading spirits of the Romantic school, Chateaubriand and his friends, aired their views.

Unpretentious as were Madame Récamier's rooms, a variety of entertainment was carefully provided. From time to time there were soirées to which no invitation was required. There would be music; Ampère, Delphine Gay, and Chateaubriand read their unpublished works, or old Talma might be persuaded to recite something. But the free tone of the old days was gone. A stiff formality made itself felt. The chairs were placed in circles, somewhat far from one another; the ladies sat, and the men stood or moved about between the chairs. The guests were so grouped that only people of similar tastes were together, a

set order ruling. One can understand that young rebels like Mérimée and Lamartine did not feel at ease. The reason for the assembly was obvious—to glorify old Chateaubriand.

Madame Récamier and Chateaubriand met for the first time in 1801, at Madame de Staël's and fleetingly. The impression made on Chateaubriand by the beautiful woman he expressed in the following words:

"Madame de Staël went on talking and was eloquent, but I scarcely replied, as I could not turn my eyes from Madame Récamier. I could never have imagined anything like her. I was more discouraged than ever, and my admiration for her was followed by depression as to my own merits."

He had then just mounted the first rung of the ladder with his romance "*Atala*."

Seventeen years later, Chateaubriand again met Juliette Récamier at Madame de Staël's, but this time when Germaine was dying. The meeting led to a friendship between them such as this woman of forty had never before known. It became a passion, agitating her hitherto serene spirit. She had a difficult time with him, for his was an egoistic, vain nature and he gave her many bad hours with his caprices. For a time she bore this patiently, until she began to suspect that these whims were largely pose. It was a bitter disillusionment, and it took Juliette several months to get over it and recover her usual equanimity.

Chateaubriand realized what he had lost by this estrangement. He used every means to win her back. And he succeeded. The feeling was no longer the old pas-

sion, but it changed into a quiet, understanding friendship, which lasted till the author's death and which he labored with touching care to preserve, even later when he was racked by gout and Madame Récamier was stricken with blindness.

He would come punctually at three o'clock. That was *his* time, that he would share with no one, and which he gave entirely to his friend. Then he would throw off the poseur, and show himself simple, lovable, and natural. He talked eloquently of his work and projects, while Juliette listened attentively. He would walk to the window and look out on the convent garden, where the nuns strolled beneath the acacia trees while their pupils were at play. Or he might glance past the green treetops to the distant hills of Sèvres, all golden in the sunset. While his eyes drank in the scene Juliette at the piano would play some wistful air. The bells of the Angelus would ring, mingling with the notes of the piano, as if both were singing:

"Pianger il giorno che se muore."

The Little Lady of Berlin

IF, at the beginning of last century, a stranger had taken an evening walk in Berlin, going down the Jägerstrasse to the Gendarmenmarkt, he would have seen, close by the so-called Seehandlung, the bank founded by Frederick the Great, an unpretentious house, its windows streaming with light. It was bourgeois in appearance, but distinguished guests were entering. Gentlemen, looking like artists, in long carricks with broad-brimmed high hats, elegant carriages from which ladies alighted, in caplike hats, trimmed with flowers and wreaths, beneath which little curls peeped, while costly stuffs hung mantilla-like from their shoulders. Young dandies in top boots, with high-collared cloaks, which flapped open, showing the brightly colored coats beneath, escorted these ladies; and statesmen and soldiers of high rank were also among the guests.

The observer would have thought that a person of consequence lived in the house, an ambassador or a prince, who was giving some important reception in his rooms. His astonishment would have been great when he was told by some well-informed citizen of Berlin that the house belonged to the widow of a Jewish merchant, Markus Levin, that his daughter Rahel was having her usual "day"—and that the slim young officer who had just alighted from his horse at the door, and gone up the steps with his spurs jingling, was no other than Prince Louis Ferdinand. A Jewish girl to have such guests, he would have decided, must either be extraordinarily rich or amazingly beautiful.

To see with our own eyes whether he is right, let us go upstairs as an attendant of the prince. We enter a friendly, tasteful room, not overlarge or overluxurious. The homely atmosphere is of middle-class life. Looking for the lady who must be queen of this little kingdom, we see a slender, yet dignified figure with a delicate head and a face of oriental beauty, leaning gracefully back in a chair, while young Schleiermacher pours out all the eloquence of his soul to her. He is speaking of the gift for seeing God in this world, not as a theologian pointing out other people's sins, but as a man of breeding, a man of the world.

She listens attentively but without warmth, or real sympathy, simply waiting for the chance to throw in a clever remark of her own. Though the seal of prophecy is on her brow, she is more like a spoiled child with a whim to be clever, than a woman of original brain. She looks like a Frenchwoman, a *dame galante*, of good form, but somewhat wanting in soul. Even while Schleiermacher is pouring his words into her ear, words which should sink into her soul, she is shaking off the burden of this bore, for Wilhelm von Humboldt and Major Peter von Gualtieri are having a hot discussion about Goethe close by, and she sees a chance to drop in some of her studied aphorisms. Humboldt answers with a smile, half courteous, half pitying—the smile of a past inclination—and turns again to the major, who is never tired of saying that he values his friendship with Goethe more than the entrée to the greatest courts of the world. After a time, during which Schleiermacher is still pouring out his religious fervor, they stroll away, and Humboldt whispers to his neighbor:

"The pretty Herz is rather silly. She might at least learn to quote correctly."

"You admired her once," laughs the major.

So that is not the lady we seek; we have taken Henriette Herz for Rahel Levin. There, in that corner, on the sofa—that girl with small, well-cut features under black curls, and dark, brilliant eyes, full of kindliness and soul! She is listening attentively to the young officer, sitting by her—she must be the hostess. The respect—the extraordinary liking that all show for her leaves no doubt of it. The officer by her side, whose good-looking youth has a sort of magic in it, we know already to be Frederick the Great's nephew, who has chosen this little lady of Berlin to be his confessor in affairs of the heart. Before he mixes with the rest of the guests his friend must give him a quarter of an hour to himself. He must tell her his troubles. He loves two women at once, and it is a martyrdom! Henriette Fromm has the older right, but the other, Pauline Wiesel—wife of a minister of war—she is so lovely!

"You know how dearly I love Pauline and how truly I adore Henriette! Those two women, so charming, so worthy to be loved—who possess my heart entirely—I am afraid they don't really love me! You saw Pauline; she wept thousands of tears as if she were being made to love me against her will. Tell me what to do! Preach moderation! You'll make everything right."

Rahel fulfils her office of adviser with her usual art. She pours balsam on the distraught mind of the prince, and under her quiet ministration his cares vanish; he forgets his remorse and becomes again his light-hearted self.

He then begins to tease his friend about her enthusiasm for Goethe and declares at length that "Egmont" is a very inferior play. Rahel parries his thrusts and says that he would change his mind if he once got to know Goethe. And she is right. The prince soon after is to meet Goethe at Weimar and change completely in the great poet's favor. He will then write to acquaint his little friend of the fact, saying that now he is sure her "brother's" value will have increased by some three thousand crowns in her eyes.

As the evening advances the talk becomes livelier. New guests arrive. Suddenly a charming little lady comes in, received by them all with acclamation. Laughing, she goes to Rahel and falls into an armchair. It is Madame Unzelmann, the famous tragedienne of the Berlin stage. Who, watching her in this salon, so gay and full of life, will believe that she has had her greatest triumphs in the parts of Ophelia and Lady Macbeth? The first to speak to her is Friedrich Schlegel, who breaks off his talk with Rahel's brother, Ludwig Robert, and with a few cutting remarks about Shakespeare, brings the conversation round to the theater.

They talk of the latest novelties, of Righini's operas, which have won such applause, of Fleck, lying seriously ill, wondering who his successor will be. They praise and find fault with his performance in "Wallenstein," and the talk swings to Schiller's "Maid of Orléans," a success at its first performance in Leipzig. Fichte's "System of Morals" and Schleiermacher's "Confidential Letters on Lucinde" provide fresh topics for their play of words, their keen criticisms, chiseled aphorisms, and paradoxes. When

Schlegel gives an opinion, he does so carefully, weightily, but it is the weight of solid metal. Old Gualtieri always has his say, though he knows nothing about it as a rule; and, when he is attacked, he becomes like a snapping ferret, sticking to his point of view, which he supports with extraordinary arguments. Major von Schack comments like a man of the world with a sense of humor, Madame Unzelmann keeps the gayer side uppermost, Ludwig Robert and the poet Brinckmann carry the talk gracefully from one theme to another, and Rahel triumphs over them all with her easiness and sweetness—always coming in at the right time with wit or shrewdness, praise, blame, and encouragement.

The talk has been in groups, but when the tea is brought it becomes general. Rahel's brother recites an acrostic, which derides Gualtieri, but that worthy looks doubtful, not knowing whether he has been flattered or insulted. He ends by taking Ludwig Robert by the arm, walking him aside and saying:

"You called me an egoist, didn't you? Now what exactly did you mean by that? Nothing bad, I hope?"

Rahel does not approve of this sort of amusement; she thinks verses caricaturing a person present are not in good taste. In the middle of the dispute the famous publicist, Friedrich Gentz, comes in. He looks sharply round to see how many of his enemies may be present, frowns at Friedrich Schlegel and takes his seat as far from him as possible. The successful publicist, with his fickle disposition, has caused as much talk in Berlin by his loose life as by his undoubted talent. With little questions and startling re-

marks he now secures the attention of the others and then he displays his amazing powers of eloquence, so full of warmth and zeal, wisdom and high purpose that no one can resist it. Rahel's dark eyes glow with delight. She never tires of applauding her friend, whose real nature she declares, in spite of everything, to be of noble quality. She cries approvingly:

"Right, Gentz! Bravo! Splendid!"

The excitement is interrupted by Prince Louis Ferdinand, who rises and prepares to go. But before he has reached the door Prince Radziwill enters and begs him to stay a little longer. Louis Ferdinand can refuse this beloved brother-in-law nothing, so he sits at the piano and plays a few chords as prelude. All talk stops. Rahel goes to the window with Prince Radziwill. Then Prince Louis Ferdinand begins to improvise—fantasies, now pathetic and now powerful. He dreams in this way at the piano for half an hour, then breaks off, takes courteous leave of everyone and goes. It is the signal for a general leave-taking.

A little later, the homely house in the Jägerstrasse which was so brilliantly lit stands dark and still. Only from one attic window comes a faint light. It is Rahel's bedroom. She has not gone to bed, but is reading her beloved Goethe, filling her soul with the beauty of his thought, and writing on the margin of the pages her comments and feelings. Without, *unter den Linden*, a lonely rider is on his way to the palace, with sunk head and stormily beating heart. And behind him rides another with cadaverous face; it is Death. Like a shadow, it follows Frederick's nephew. Only a short time, and a French bullet will let out the

young prince's life-blood in the sand of Saalfeld. And a sword will pierce Rahel's soft heart.

Rahel's salon had two brilliant epochs; one from 1796 to 1806 and the other from 1819 to 1833. During the first period it was the arena of the romantics; Rahel was brought into close communion with them by their common enthusiasm for Fichte and Goethe. She was impressed by the boldness and absolute truth with which Fichte set down his ideas on the Absolute Ego. With the arbitrary interpretation of his teaching by the romantics—by which they derived from it a self-centered contempt for moral codes—she was not at all in agreement; she also refused to approve of the emancipation of women through the overthrow of convention, advocated so warmly by the Schlegel brothers, though she had a full appreciation of woman's rights. She warmly sympathized with their recognition of Goethe as viceroy of the kingdom of poetry, but she was disapproving of the way the romantics ignored his classic ideals, and took the ingredient—such as Wilhelm Meister's aimless travels, his slow approach to things—as the main feature. She had a much deeper appreciation of Goethe than they. He was her great experience, and she was probably the first one to understand him completely.

"A new volume of Goethe was a feast to me," she says in one of her letters, "a dearly loved, respected, honored guest, opening new doors for me into a new life, unknown, but full of light. He accompanied me all through my life; I took seizin of his kingdom, he was my one, my truest friend, my rock, saving me from spending myself with

ghosts: my superior and my consoling friend, for I knew the hell he knew. I grew up with him, and after a thousand separations I always found him again. I, who am no writer, can never express what he was to me!"

She did not need to express it, for everyone who was with her felt what Goethe meant to her. When she spoke of "*Wilhelm Meister*," or of "*Tasso*," her two favorite works, when she analyzed them in her clear and understanding way, or in the course of talk she quoted from one or other of Goethe's works, one felt that, unlike the superficial admiration of her contemporaries, she was profoundly penetrated with his whole purpose. In this respect she was a complete contrast to Henriette Herz, who also cherished a Goethe cult in her salon, but superficially—burning incense to the god on his high altar. Such poses were foreign to Rahel; she did not even share Bettina von Arnim's ecstasies, and pray to the poet:

"If I have found devotion, it is upon thy breast, my friend. Incense breathing from thy lips, the spirit of God preaching from thy eyes, a spiritual power streaming from thee—from thy garments, thy face, thy spirit. . . . All pour forth holy things!"

Rahel tended her admiration for Goethe in her inmost soul. In this lay her undoubted influence over her contemporaries. Nowhere was so much done for the spreading and understanding of Goethe's poetry as in her salon.

The events of Jena and Auerstadt threw their gloomy shadows over Rahel. The kingdom of Frederick the Great was broken up, and over its ruins triumphed the power

of Napoleon. Discouragement and despair oppressed all spirits, but in the noblest of the nation the flames of wrath and revenge sprang up, nourished by shame at the defeat. Toward the end of 1807, Fichte began to hold his "Talks to the German Nation," and the patriotic went to listen with approval. Rahel and her brother Ludwig Robert were always among his audience. Fichte's words woke a powerful response in Rahel's heart, and the spell of his burning speech strengthened her patriotism. The figure of this great combatant for freedom drove Goethe from her mind for a time, artistic interests being pushed into the background. One must not suppose that Rahel's salon was a political one, like Madame de Staël's. She had not the right kind of following. Her circle of friends was split up, and few, with the exception of Fichte, could understand her fine enthusiasm. She could not receive many friends now, for her income was considerably smaller, owing to the depressed state of the Prussian money market, and her new home was very modest, for she lived alone as a result of constant misunderstandings with her mother. Entertaining on a grand scale she had to forgo, and to do without pleasures, like the theaters and concerts.

"At my tea-table, as you call it," she writes to the poet Brinckmann, depicting her life as it is now, "I sit alone with my dictionaries. Tea is no longer made in my house. It is the same in other things. I was never so entirely solitary."

In this sad state she came across a young student who had met her casually twice before, and had long admired her from a distance. It was Karl August Varnhagen. In spite of the difference of their ages—Rahel was already

thirty-seven and Varnhagen only twenty-three—and in spite of the difference in their natures—she was a woman of deep feeling and he still an undeveloped youngster—a friendship developed. Rahel had not yet fully got over a passion for the Spaniard Urquijo, and the quiet, chivalrous Varnhagen was a comforter into whose ear she could pour her trouble. His sympathy and the pains he took to understand her gave her great happiness.

“Your understanding of me is the sweetest thing I have,” she wrote to him later, and she took it as a proof of his real love for her. All the friendly interest and affectionate care she used to shower on so many she now showered, in her loneliness, on the one man who knew how to read her soul.

After waiting six years, they consecrated their union. Restless years followed, during which the couple went here and there. Now Varnhagen, as a member of the diplomatic corps, had to take part in the Congress at Vienna, now he was sent to Paris, and again to Potsdam as Prussian chargé d'affaires. Between these posts were many journeys, which he took sometimes alone and sometimes with Rahel. In October, 1819, they moved to Berlin. As he had declined a post in the United States that he owed to his liberal views, he was allowed to become Geheimer Legationsrath.

Rahel now found herself once more on the scene of her old activities, and her first act was to reopen her *bureau d'esprit*—or as she called it, to “open out her attic.” In the “Gallerie von Bildnissen aus Rahels Umgang und Briefwechsel,” Varnhagen has depicted the friends who formed

the circle. All the great men of the Berlin University were among them; the foremost was Hegel. Twenty years before Fichte's ethical ideals had been discussed in Rahel's salon; now it was Hegel's speculative philosophy, brilliantly put before them by Edward Gans, whose clever dialectic was always starting new fires of enthusiasm.

Among the old devotees was Wilhelm von Humboldt, always a close friend of Rahel's, but his brother Alexander was the more conspicuous. He could tell so much about his adventurous life and tell it so amusingly that he became the center of interest as soon as he appeared. A much younger man was also applauded—Leopold Ranke. Rahel had a warm liking for this young scholar, until he fell head over ears in love with Bettina von Arnim.

Bettina was Rahel's only rival in Berlin and often came to the salon. They got on very well, even if they did occasionally quarrel. Rahel never hesitated to call Bettina the cleverest of women, and Bettina admitted Rahel's ethical superiority. Bettina deserved the epithet "clever." When she entered a room it was as if a whirlwind were blowing. She had something lively or penetrating to say to everyone. Even men like Gans and Humboldt had to collect their wits to answer her attacks. Only Rahel could manage to put in a quiet word here and there, and she was soon reduced to silence as Bettina seized the whole conversation, pouring out such coruscating ideas that a stranger might have taken this eccentric woman for a witch. Only one man could keep up a battle of words with her, and that was Prince Pückler-Muskau, who brought the adventurous element into Rahel's salon. This clever German Casanova,

who could talk of tiger-hunts or piquant experiences with the same blasé air, this artist in life, who could handle the most difficult situations with lightness and ease, came to the salon now and then, bringing a whimsical humor to its somewhat serious tone.

Poets were not lacking there. Laube wrote this of Rahel:

“There lived a woman in Berlin who wrote letters, a woman of power, whose works should be read and studied by all who would learn to know the manners and society of her day.”

And one day there came to see her a wasted, abrupt youth, with pale, sulky face. He was self-centered, cynical, but Rahel’s insight told her that his manner was assumed and that behind the cynicism there lay hidden a deep sorrow. She thought him a man of extreme self-consciousness, feared for his moral outlook, and took him under her wing. It seemed as if her influence would succeed; he looked up to her as to a saint and when they were quietly alone he told her he was a poet. She read his little songs and found a note of Goethe in them which rejoiced her. She became more a mother than a friend to him, spoiling her favorite in every possible way—but her good purpose failed. After a long absence, he came back again, now a famous man, and he was worse-mannered than ever. He had the audacity to tell her—Rahel, who had received the homage of so many famous men—that she ought to be flattered at his visit! It hurt the old lady’s pride, and she retorted:

“If you think so much of yourself, I’d rather you didn’t come at all!”

This the ungracious child of the Muses answered by letter—sneering and bitter:

“It will certainly be a long time before I sink as low in my own esteem as you seem to wish. Until then you must content yourself with your feathered folk, who chatter at your bidding and, in the matter of caging, simply can’t help themselves.”

Soon after, the old lady fell ill; her health had never been good. She was very ill—and the conscience of the young poet pricked him. He remembered all the kindness he had received from her and sent her a bouquet of lovely roses. Before she had fully recovered she wrote in her notebook with trembling hand:

A bridge of roses brought me back to life,
Miraculous roses, for Heine gave them to me.

The Dancing Congress

WHEN the battle of Leipzig settled the fate of the great Corsican, and under the attack of the allied nations his power fell in ruins, bonfires were lighted everywhere in rejoicing for their freedom and in the light of their flames everyone feasted. But the real celebration of victory took place a year later. While Napoleon growled like a caged lion on the island of Elba, waiting for the moment when he could escape, they were enjoying in the old imperial city on the Danube a series of entertainments such as had never before been seen there.

On the eighteenth of October, the anniversary of the battle, festivities started with a celebration in the Prater. That morning everyone in Vienna was up and about early, and all who could were hurrying to the park, where the great ceremony was to take place. A thick autumnal mist lay over the grass, but it soon cleared and the sun shone on the moving crowds. A hillock had been thrown up for the day, and a small temple built upon it, on whose pillars standards and trophies were hanging. It was the prince's tent. Nearly all the rulers of Europe, with the exception of the sultan, were assembled here, including two emperors, four kings, and archdukes and crowned heads of lesser rank, with a large following of ministers, courtiers, soldiers of high rank, church dignitaries, and famous men. Such a gathering had not been seen since the Council of Constance.

A mass was first celebrated by the Archbishop of Vienna with his full clergy. At the moment of consecration

the cannon thundered over the plain, and all the kings, princes, generals, and soldiers knelt in prayer. After the priest had pronounced the blessing and all had risen, a choir sang the hymn of peace, soldiers and spectators joining in. During this hymn, sung by ten thousand people, the bells rang, the cannon were again fired, and the princes in their glittering uniforms looked down from the hill at the imposing spectacle at their feet. When the religious ceremony was over, the crowd went to the Simmering Heath, where the garrison, many thousand strong, with men who had fought at Leipzig among them, feasted in the open. Entertainment had been provided to suit all tastes, and not till the sun set did the cheerful tumult abate. The great comedy of the Vienna Congress, which was to regulate the affairs of Europe, had begun.

To entertain such a crowd of people as now proposed to settle in Vienna for some months to come required preparation. It was not enough to strengthen the company at the theater, and summon the most famous actors in Germany and the ballet from the Paris Opera House; the imagination of the chamberlains had to arrange banquets, routs, concerts, hunting parties, skating parties. Once again we find that everyone wants to make up for the enforced lack of pleasure during recent years. The new peace was celebrated jubilantly, and in the chain of amusements they quickly forgot the seriousness of the occasion which had brought them there. They distributed crowns in the chatter of a salon or settled the destiny of nations over a game of cards.

“The congress dances, but it does not march.”

Nothing could reveal more clearly the absorption in gaiety than this trenchant comment of the old Prince de Ligne, a fine observer who grew up in the days of the rococo and brought something of that art of living into the salons of Paris and Vienna.

Naturally the court was the center of social activity; the sum of forty million francs which this congress of seven months cost shows the gigantic scale of the expenditure. But there were other houses in which receptions were given. One might say that each nation was represented by some lady, France by the Comtesse de Périgord, Prussia by the Princess of Thurn und Taxis, Austria by Countess Fuchs or Princess Fürstenberg, England by Lady Castle-reagh, Denmark by Countess Bernsdorff, and Russia by Princess Bagration.

The last-named, wife of the field marshal, was one of the most brilliant figures of the congress. She was exceptionally beautiful, with a well-built figure, an alabaster skin, and a gentle face, only marred by the short-sighted eyes. All the Russian nobility in Vienna went to her salon; the tsar and the kings of Prussia and Bavaria also attended. The lord chamberlain, Narischkin, who always had a bon mot at the end of his tongue, took his place in this society. When he, Talleyrand, and the Prince de Ligne were there together there was no need to trouble about entertainment; the three kept up a perfect firework display of wit.

Talleyrand was another who kept alive the old French reputation for social charm. He had all the talents for it; clear and ready speech, trenchant humor, and an easy, courteous manner. In that he was like the Prince de Ligne,

who stood for the lightness and liveliness of the gallant age while Talleyrand personified its aristocratic dignity. The prince was the more original, Talleyrand more the shrewd man of the world. Though he was the spokesman of a defeated nation he showed so much easy dignity that he might have been representing the most powerful of countries, there to dictate terms. Alexander said of him, somewhat grudgingly:

“Monsieur de Talleyrand behaves like a minister of Louis XIV.”

After the French custom, Talleyrand often received guests while his valet was still dressing his hair, and talked of important things to his visitors. In his salon the Comtesse de Périgord acted as hostess, and he would sit beside her on the sofa, discoursing with statesmen, who stood round him, attentively, noting his remarks as if they were unimpeachable truths. Politics was the main theme at these gatherings, and the weightiest matters were discussed here. When the members of the various embassies were at cross purposes, Talleyrand would listen with apparent indifference, knowing that in the end all would turn to him and that he, with his finely superior smile, would have the last word; that decisive word which Pozzo di Borgo, the “loyal” general who had raised the French to fight against Germany and then, after Leipzig, had encouraged the Allies to march on Paris, would confirm with quotations from Dante and Tacitus—usually misapplied.

In the salon of the Countess Fuchs, who received her guests with a dignity that earned her the name of “queen,” politics had practically no place. Mirth was the goddess

ruling here, and intimacy was aimed at. To her little suppers came Gentz, Varnhagen, Eugène de Beauharnais, the Duke of Dalberg, Wallmoden, and other well-known men, to gossip and to pay their compliments to the lady of the house.

Times of such gaiety demanded new sensations, either novelties in the way of amusement or eccentric personalities. A note of the romantic was desirable. One remembers that in the pleasure-sated days of Louis XIV the preaching of a Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Esprit Fléchier suddenly gave them exciting experiences which ladies of culture took as a pleasant duty. Vienna, too, had during the congress its fashionable preacher, beloved of the ladies. This was the author, Zacharias Werner, formerly a Lutheran. He had exchanged the stage for the pulpit, and now preached with fascinating power in the various Viennese churches, usually in St. Stephan.

When he was preaching there would scarcely be room for all the worshipers, even in the great cathedral. They swarmed to hear him, partly from curiosity. The women, whether Austrian or foreigners, could not have enough of this haggard priest, who with face of deathlike pallor and deeply sunken eyes, looked like a specter in the dim light of the church. His sermons were impregnated with a mysticism that was sensuously rich in imagery and symbol. He usually spoke of something that concerned his own previous, sinful life, to emphasize the significance of his conversion to his listeners, whom he would now and then chide indirectly.

He would often warmly inveigh against his own plays,

written at an earlier time, which the Viennese managers, taking advantage of his popularity, were producing at their theaters. He declaimed against their evil influence, hoping to prevent the public from going to the performances. Naturally he effected just the opposite result; the same people who thronged his church in the morning would hurry to the theater at night. They listened to the new Paul in the morning and enjoyed the old Saul in the evening. The Vienna Congress had its piquant moments!

In the endless succession of amusements there was no halt. Not a day for five long months that had not had its festivity, and the fever seemed to grow. The carnival was celebrated with unparalleled enjoyment. Its tumult had scarcely died down when news reached Vienna that Napoleon had left Elba. But they were not much disturbed at the rumor, for they thought the English cruisers would soon capture him and take him back to his place of exile. They went on dancing with unruffled composure.

There was a big ball at Prince Metternich's house. The potentates and all the elect of the congress were there. In the brilliantly lit rooms swayed a crowd of smart uniforms and silken gowns. A waltz sounded from the estrade through the great ballroom. Tsar Alexander was dancing with Princess Bagration, and Emperor Francis was talking to the King of Prussia. Not far from them Wellington was whispering pretty nothings into a lady's ear.

A general came hastily into the room. His cheeks glowed with excitement, and he spoke hurriedly, breathlessly:

"Napoleon has landed at Cannes. The soldiers are re-

ceiving their general with acclamations. He is on his way to Paris in triumph."

Those standing near heard and understood. They stopped dancing. The news flew from couple to couple. All were still, though the orchestra continued to play. The tsar bowed his thanks to Princess Bagration and went to Talleyrand:

"I always told you this would not last long."

The French ambassador said nothing; without a sign he bowed to the tsar. Frederick William beckoned to the Duke of Wellington, and they left the room together. Soon after the tsar left also, with the emperor and Metternich. The greater part of the guests disappeared. The countless wax candles seemed suddenly to have lost their luster. The room was still as death.

Still as death! The luster of the salon was its social charm; we have followed that charm through five centuries, to see it die out at last. Today by the word "salon" we understand something that has no connection with the earlier meaning of the word. The art of social life is dead.

The reasons for this are many, but the chief is that our times are ruled by the material. Gain is the beginning and end of our lives today, and even men of susceptibility and refinement yield to its demands. This continual preoccupation with material things, this incessant greed, give life a mechanical rhythm which can only find relief in sensationalism. Whether politics, sport, dancing, the theater, music, literature, or art provides the sensation, it is the one thing talked of. The power of interesting oneself

in others, the earnest discussions of serious subjects, the delightful talks with one of the other sex, which made the charm of society in past ages—these things seem completely at an end. Above all, the absence of well-worded conversation is most noticeable nowadays, and where this is lacking no true salon can develop.

When will the salon come to life again? And when will women again be ready to act as leaders of social distinction and tradition, taking their place once more in the center of all that is of importance in their times?

THE END

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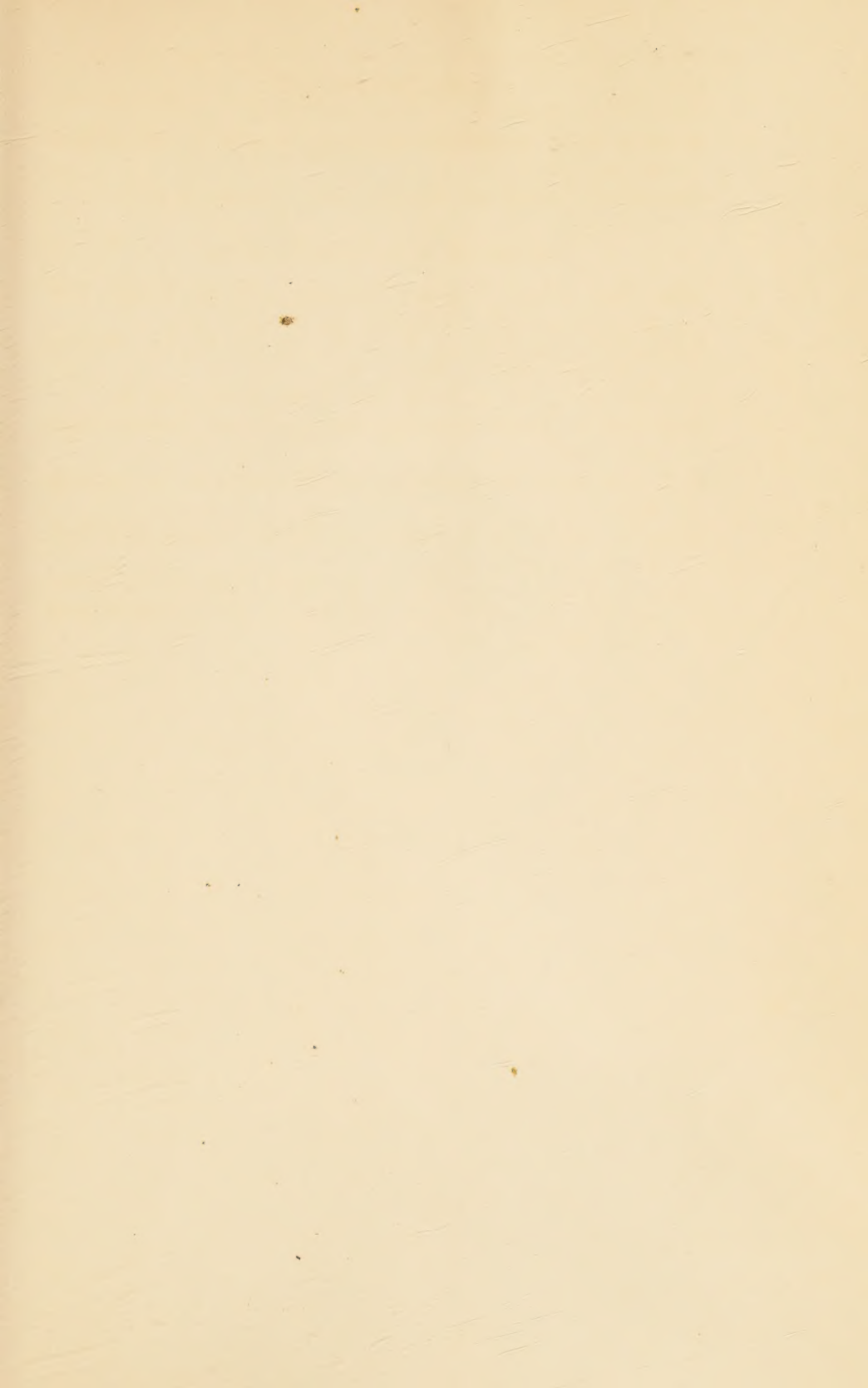
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